



Australian Children's  
Education & Care  
Quality Authority™

# Report on National Quality Framework and Regulatory Burden - Wave III

November 2015

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# About this study

## ■ ■ ■ Design

This is the third report of a three year longitudinal study on perceptions of administrative burden among providers of children's education and care services. The study measures changes over time using a panel approach. This means that only the responses of 859 providers that participated in all three waves of the study are reported.

The main benefit of the panel approach is that it strengthens the ability to explain the cause of shifts in perceptions of burden over time. Surveying the same providers also gives a more accurate reflection of perceptions of administrative burden within the larger population<sup>1</sup>.

## ■ ■ ■ Reporting

This study reports on 'significant' changes in the perception of burden over time. When this report uses the term significant it indicates that there is 99 per cent confidence that the result is an accurate reflection of the population and not due to randomness in the sample.

Effect sizes have been calculated to improve confidence in reporting statistical significance. The effect size explains how much influence the result had on perceptions of burden over time (small, moderate or large).

The report only discusses a result from the survey if it is deemed statistically significant (that is, if there is 99 per cent confidence in the reliability of the result and there is at least a small effect size).

<sup>1</sup>Cohen, L et al (2007). *Research Methods in Education*, London and New York, Routledge: Pp. 178.

# Executive Summary

## ■ ■ ■ Key messages

This report presents the findings from the third wave of a longitudinal study to investigate perceptions of administrative burden among providers of children's education and care services.

The study reveals a number of positive findings including consistently high levels of support for the National Quality Framework (NQF) and a significant decline in perceptions of overall burden associated with the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations – down from 15 per cent who reported very high levels of burden in Wave I to nine per cent in Wave III.

This decrease is associated with three specific administrative requirements – supervisor certificates, provider and service approvals, and ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations. It is notable that each of these requirements has been the focus of targeted efforts by governments and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) to support services and minimise administrative burden.

There have also been significant improvements between Waves I and III and between Waves II and III in responses to the following statements:

- that administrative burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations
- that the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations are simpler than the previous licensing and accreditation systems.

In addition, significantly fewer respondents agreed that they were doing more work than necessary to make sure that they meet the requirements of the National Law and Regulations.

In contrast to these encouraging findings, perceived burden associated with quality assessment and ratings visits has significantly increased and appears to be underscored by two related activities – preparing staff, and preparing paperwork for the visit like Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) and updating and collating documentation. This increase is alongside substantial growth in the number of services having been quality rated, from 21 per cent in Wave I to 75 per cent in Wave III. This suggests that respondents are more likely in Wave III to be drawing on their actual experience of being quality rated rather than their initial anticipation of a visit.

Linked to quality and assessment and ratings visits are two other administrative requirements – quality improvement plans, and documenting children's learning. Perceived burden associated with these requirements remains persistently high.

To address these perceptions of administrative burden, ACECQA's work with the sector, including through national workshops, sector communications and guidance continues to reinforce that the focus of quality assessment is not how much documentation a service has, but rather how it is used to inform planning to extend children's thinking and learning.

## Summary of changes in burden by Wave III



### OVERALL BURDEN

Overall burden has decreased over time



### STAFF KNOWLEDGE

Burden with staff knowledge has decreased over time



### SERVICE APPROVALS

Burden with service approvals has decreased over time



### SUPERVISOR CERTIFICATES

Burden with supervisor certificates has decreased over time



### DOCUMENTATION

Burden with documenting children's learning and Quality Improvement Plans is consistently high over time



**UNCHANGED**



### ASSESSMENT AND RATING VISITS

Burden with assessment and rating visits has increased over time  
Activities contributing to this increase are preparing staff and preparing paperwork



## ■ ■ ■ Background

The NQF was introduced to improve the quality of Australia's early childhood education and care and outside school hours care services. Another objective of the NQF was to reduce unnecessary compliance burden on children's education and care providers through a jointly-governed system of regulation, replacing duplicative and inconsistent regulatory schemes operated by the Australian, state and territory governments.

ACECQA reports regularly on the progress of the implementation of the NQF to the Australian Government and state and territory governments through the Education Council. This includes reporting on 'the experience of services under the NQF, with respect to the level of regulatory burden' under the Implementation Plan for the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (NQA IP)<sup>2</sup>. Ministers have agreed that the focus of this reporting should be on administrative or paperwork burden, as a sub-set of regulatory burden.

To monitor changes in perceptions and experiences of this type of regulatory burden over time, a longitudinal study was developed. The first study (Wave I) was undertaken in 2013, and was followed by Wave II in 2014 and Wave III in the first half of 2015.

## ■ ■ ■ 2013 Research ('Wave I')

ACECQA's first report on children's education and care services' perceptions and experiences of administrative burden under the NQF was finalised in 2013. The report provided the results from the first ('baseline') stage of research (Wave I), which measured the perceptions and experiences of burden of 4,898 providers and services across transitional, current and ongoing burden. The Wave I study was conducted in April 2013, approximately 12 months into the operation of the NQF. At this point only 13 per cent of services had been quality rated (1,620).

Key findings from Wave I included:

- Overall, respondents were very supportive of the NQF despite perceiving a significant level of burden associated with ongoing administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations.
- Providers whose services had been quality rated were among the groups most supportive of the NQF. They also perceived a much lower level of administrative burden.
- A significant portion of burden was found to be driven by the transition to the NQF.
- Most services indicated that administration in relation to educational programs was the biggest ongoing increase in administrative burden imposed by the NQF.
- Nevertheless, most services associated this increase with a commensurate increase in the quality of service being delivered.

<sup>2</sup>MCEECDYA, Implementation Plan for the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care, 2011, p.10

- The vast majority of interviewees stated that the requirements had led to better educational programs and ultimately improved outcomes for children.
- Furthermore, most stated that the time taken to document the program and learning outcomes was reducing as the educators became more familiar with the framework and the processes. These obligations are therefore viewed by many in the sector as fundamental elements of professional practice, and differ from what is traditionally considered 'red tape'.
- Supplementing the perception survey was a standard cost model (SCM) report. The SCM provides estimates of the relative cost of complying with specific administrative requirements of the NQF and the findings of interviews with a cross-section of 32 providers across two jurisdictions.
- As agreed by the then SCSEEC, the SCM was not reproduced in Wave II because the relative measurable costs of compliance was unlikely to change much over a 12 month period. This, coupled with the high demand on resources in producing the SCM also made it a less worthwhile option in Wave II.

## 2014 Research ('Wave II')

The Wave II survey was conducted between February and March 2014, involving 1,531 respondents that also participated in Wave I. Given that perceptions of burden among respondents were unlikely to have changed substantially since Wave I, it was decided to present only those results that were statistically significantly different from Wave I<sup>3</sup> in a condensed report. At this point 35 percent of services had been quality rated (4,968).

Key differences in findings between Wave I and Wave II included:

- Respondents from centre-based services reported lower overall burden in Wave II.
- Lower overall burden in Wave II was moderately influenced by changes in the perceptions of respondents from preschool/kindergartens previously operating under state and territory regulations, or for preschool/kindergartens operating more than 40 years.
- Perceptions of nominated supervisors within preschool/kindergartens slightly contributed to lower overall burden in Wave II.
- Shifts in the perceptions of approved providers of not-for-profit (NFP) services also had a small impact on lower overall burden in Wave II.
- Respondents perceived lower burden with supervisor certificates and displaying information in Wave II.

<sup>3</sup>The effect of respondent characteristics (predictors) produced an effect size greater than  $\pm 0.05$  and a confidence level less than 0.05

## 2015 Research ('Wave III')

The third wave of the survey was conducted between April and May 2015. Results are based on responses from the 859 respondents who participated in all three waves. By the final wave of the study three quarters (657 of 859) of respondents had experienced quality assessment and rating<sup>4</sup>.

### Key findings



#### SUPPORT FOR THE NQF

Support has remained consistently high over time



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Positive findings included:

- Continuing high levels of support for the NQF (over 80 per cent reported being either supportive or very supportive in each wave of the study)
- Significant declines between Waves I and III and Waves II and III in the proportions of respondents who disagree that, since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations:
  - » administrative burden has reduced (down from 28 per cent that strongly disagreed in Wave I to 20 per cent in Wave III)
  - » administrative requirements are simpler (down from 12 per cent that strongly disagreed in Wave I to eight per cent in Wave III)
  - » More work than necessary is not required to meet the requirements (down from 30 per cent that strongly agreed in Wave I to 23 per cent in Wave III).
- Significant declines between Waves I and III and Waves II and III for:
  - » Perception of overall burden (burden at the highest end fell from 15 per cent in Wave I to nine per cent in Wave III)
  - » Perception of burden with supervisor certificates (burden at the highest end fell from 15 per cent in Wave I to just five percent in Wave III)

<sup>4</sup>56 per cent of all services across the country were quality rated at the time of the Wave III survey.

- » Perception of burden with provider and service approvals (burden at the highest end fell from six per cent in Wave I to two per cent in Wave III).
- A significant decline between Wave II and Wave III in the proportion of respondents who rated Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations as very burdensome (burden at the highest end fell from 18 per cent in Wave I to 12 per cent in Wave III).

Perceptions of burden associated with other requirements have remained largely unchanged from previous survey waves. These requirements are:

- » Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) – burden at the highest end ranged within 22 and 21 per cent of respondents across the three waves
- » Documenting children’s learning – burden at the highest end remained at 15 per cent of respondents between Wave II and III
- » Qualifications assessments – burden at the highest end ranged between seven and five per cent of respondents across the three waves
- » Notifications – burden at the highest end remained at six percent of respondents across the three waves
- » Maintaining policies and procedures – burden at the highest end remained at nine per cent of respondents between Wave II and III
- » Displaying Information – burden at the highest end ranged between nine and seven per cent of respondents across the three waves
- » Keeping Records – burden at the highest end ranged between 11 and six percent of respondents across the three waves.

## Key findings



### DOCUMENTATION

Burden with documenting children’s learning and Quality Improvement Plans is consistently high over time



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Contrary to the other requirements, perceptions of burden associated with Quality Assessment and Rating visits increased between Wave I and Wave III (from 18 per cent to 23 per cent at the highest end of burden). During this period, the proportion of services that have been quality rated has risen from around one fifth to three quarters. According to respondents, the two most burdensome tasks associated with the visits were preparing paperwork for the visit (e.g. preparing QIPs, updating and collating documentation) and preparing staff for the visit.

While remaining unchanged over three waves, the perception of burden with QIPs and documenting children's learning has remained at the higher end of the burdensome scale. These requirements are linked with quality assessment and rating visits and are likely to have contributed to the increase in perceived burden with this requirement.

Respondents indicated widespread support for a range of changes that could help ameliorate burden. The most popular of these were more or improved face to face training and guidance, and more or improved written guidance and materials.

An open-ended question invited suggestions from respondents on ways of reducing administrative burden. Numerous suggestions were received. While many of these suggestions changed over the three waves of the survey, several suggestions remained the same. The most commonly noted of these included clearer guidelines, streamlining administrative duties, more financial support particularly for hiring and training support staff, more training and support, greater consistency from regulatory authorities and Government, and developing regulations and guidelines that are unique to OSHC.

Recent initiatives and policy reviews (such as the 2014 COAG Review of National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda) continue to address the suggestions provided by respondents, including through refinements to operational practice, and policy change options such as reducing the number of standards in the National Quality Standard (NQS).

## ■ ■ ■ Current initiatives

Recent operational initiatives and policy reviews have progressed with the aim of addressing administrative burden associated with quality assessment and rating visits. These are discussed in more detail in the body of the report and include:

- options and recommendations from the 2014 COAG Review of National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda (COAG Review) which cover assessment and rating and the design of the National Quality Standard (NQS).
- establishing the National Education Leader role whose work has involved guidance to the sector on documentation and quality improvement plans. The National Education Leader has also worked collaboratively with the jurisdictions and Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) to deliver a series of National Workshops which explore and explain these topics with providers, managers and educators.

The COAG Review options are in part a response to stakeholder's issues raised through the Review's consultation process and in response to findings of the reports from previous waves of the administrative burden perception survey. In response to issues raised by stakeholders, the recommendations of the COAG Review includes options to:

- streamline the national approach to assessment and rating to make assessment and rating more efficient and transparent, including through the redevelopment of supporting templates and documents including QIPs, the authorised officer's Assessment Instrument, and the written Ratings Report.
- reduce the complexity of the NQS, for example, by reducing the number of standards and elements.

## ■ ■ ■ Future directions

Once outcomes of the 2014 COAG Review are determined and any agreed changes are fully implemented then revisiting provider experiences of administrative burden related to quality assessment and rating is recommended.

Among a variety of ways for reducing administrative burden, respondents most commonly suggested:

- clearer guidelines and material
- greater consistency from regulatory authorities and government
- more financial support to providers, particularly for hiring and training support staff
- streamlining administrative duties
- developing regulation and guidelines that are unique to OSHC.

In response to these results, ACECQA proposes further consultation with the sector, Regulatory Authorities (RAs) and Australian Government to identify specific types of guidance and support options for reducing the perception of administrative burden under the NQF.

# 1. Introduction and context

## ■ ■ ■ National Quality Framework

The NQF legislation was introduced from 1 January 2012, creating a jointly governed national approach to the regulation of children's education and care services.

The NQF includes:

- a national legislative framework that consists of the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations
- a legislated NQS and quality assessment and rating system
- a regulatory authority in each state and territory with primary responsibility for the approval, monitoring and quality assessment of services in their jurisdiction in accordance with the national legislative framework, including the NQS
- a new national body, ACECQA, which is responsible for guiding the implementation of the NQF.

## ■ ■ ■ Reducing regulatory burden

Prior to the introduction of the NQF, state and territory regulatory authorities administered unique regulatory schemes for licensing and minimum standards, while the Australian Government's National Childcare Accreditation Council regulated for quality assurance. As noted by COAG (2009) and the Regulation Taskforce (2006), the duplication and inconsistency between these nine regulatory schemes resulted in increased and unnecessary burden on service providers. Because of these non-aligned schemes, providers of different types of services experienced varying levels of burden, and this varied across jurisdictions.

A strategic objective of the NQF, therefore, was to reduce burden for education and care providers through a nationally streamlined system of regulation that would meet COAG's Principles of Best Practice Regulation (COAG, 2007).

This broad objective translated into several specific objectives and principles of the National Partnership Agreement (NPA) on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care, including to:

*Improve the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the regulation of ... education and care ... services (paragraph 16(d)).*

*Reduce regulatory burden for ... education and care .... service providers (paragraph 16(e)).*

During the NPA's implementation phase (2012 -2016), the Commonwealth, states and territories agreed to assess their performance on achieving the objectives of NPA against five performance indicators, the second of which is:

### *The regulatory burden experienced by services.*

Accordingly, the Implementation Plan for the NPA requires ACECQA to regularly report to the Education Council until January 2016 on the 'experience of services under the NQF, with respect to the level of regulatory burden' (MCEECDYA, 2011, p. 10). In order to fulfil this obligation, a longitudinal study was designed.

## ■■■ Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the level of burden associated with the regulatory requirements of the NQF as reported by educators and care providers, and identify any changes in these perceptions over time. It was anticipated that as educators and care providers grew accustomed to working under the NQF, perceptions of burden would reduce.

## ■ ■ ■ Initial scoping

In 2012, ACECQA conducted an initial scoping study involving a literature review and in depth interviews with a cross section of providers. This study assisted in defining regulatory burden, identifying appropriate research methods for measuring regulatory burden, exploring what influences perceptions of regulatory burden under the NQF, and determining the scope of the project.

From the scoping study it was concluded that:

- the research project should focus on administrative burden – this was based on the meaning of “regulatory burden”, as defined through the literature review, and the policy context in which the research project would occur
- a mixed method approach should be used, involving SCM measurement and perception surveys.

## ■■■ Definition of terms

### Regulatory burden

Broadly speaking, regulatory burden is the burden, or cost, imposed by regulation on business, government and the community. Given the objectives of the NPA, and ACECQA's obligations to report on the regulatory burden experienced by education and care services, the focus of this review is on regulatory burden on the operators of education and care services<sup>5,6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Productivity Commission (2009). Annual review of Regulatory Burdens on Business: Social and Economic Infrastructure Services. Canberra

<sup>6</sup> Riedel, H (2009) International Methods for Measuring Regulatory Costs (Vol 1. pg. 1-32)

A wide range of factors contribute to regulatory burden, including:

- financial costs (such as fees and charges)
- substantive compliance costs (such as hiring additional staff or investing in infrastructure)
- delay costs (associated with delays in an application or approval)
- irritation factors
- administrative costs.

### Administrative burden

Administrative costs, also known as administrative burden, “paperwork costs” or “red tape burden” are the costs of complying with information requirements, such as the time spent keeping records, reporting to regulatory authorities, or preparing for or taking part in inspections.

## ■■■ Measuring administrative burden

It was determined through the scoping study that a mixed method approach should be used in Wave I to measure administrative burden, using the following techniques:

- perception survey
- Standard Cost Model (SCM).

In subsequent waves, the primary focus was to be on perceptions of burden. The broad aim of the perception survey was to understand the perceptions of administrative burden among service providers and FDC educators under the NQF. Specific objectives of the survey were to:

- measure the overall perception of the level of administrative burden under the new regulatory system
- measure the proportion of services reporting a reduced burden
- understand which requirements were perceived to be most burdensome and why
- identify potential areas where requirements could be streamlined
- provide benchmarks from which to assess changes in perceptions of administrative burden over time.

The SCM was not produced in Wave III because the relative measurable costs of compliance were unlikely to change from Wave I. This, coupled with the high demand on resources in producing the SCM also made it a less worthwhile option in Wave III.

## 2. Survey Findings

The following section presents the results from the Wave III survey and compares these results with those from Waves I and II.

Results are presented in the form of frequency statistics which show patterns in responses over the three waves of the study. Where differences between the study waves were observed, descriptive statistics are presented to confirm if these differences are statistically significant<sup>7</sup>. An effect size (represented as *d*) was calculated alongside statistical significance to identify the magnitude of the change across the waves. Additional tests were conducted to determine the existence of relationships between perceptions of overall burden and burden associated with the individual administrative requirements, as well as the magnitude and direction of any relationships. However, no clear relationships were found.

### Support for the National Quality Framework

#### Overall, how supportive are you of the NQF? (=)

Respondents were asked to indicate their general support for the NQF by selecting from a range of options.

These options were:

- 1 – Not at all supportive
- 2 – Not very supportive
- 3 – Moderately supportive
- 4 – Supportive
- 5 – Very supportive.

Respondents could also select 'Can't say'<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup>Only those results that are statistically significant at the  $p < 0.01$  level and with an effect size of 0.1 or greater are reported. A full explanation of the statistical tests employed is provided in the Methodology section of the report

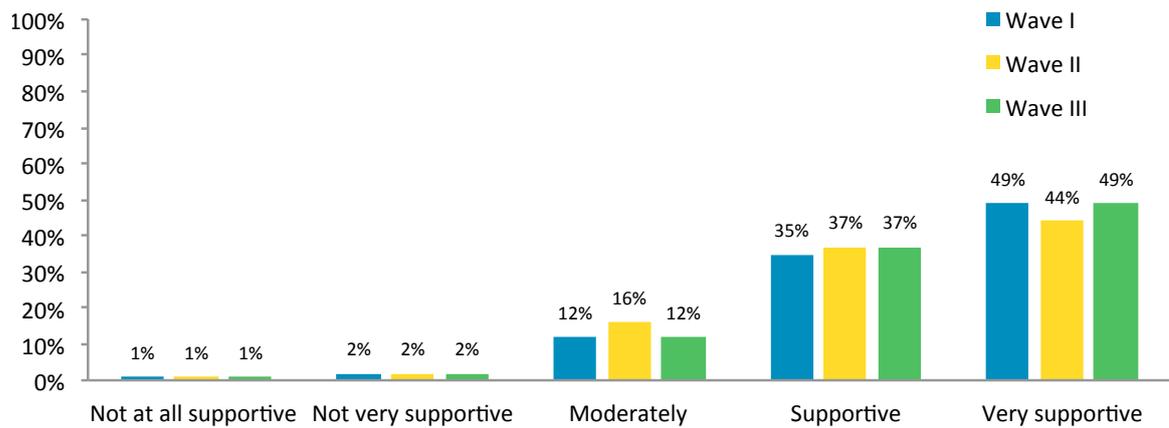
<sup>8</sup>The proportion of respondents selecting 'Can't say' is reported only when four percent or more selected this option in Wave III of the survey.

**Figure 1**, shows that the majority of respondents were supportive or very supportive of the NQF, and that this support has remained largely consistent across the three waves of the survey.

As can be seen, 86 per cent of respondents in Wave III indicated they were very supportive (49 per cent) or supportive (37 per cent) of the NQF. This is largely consistent with the proportion in Wave I.

In contrast, only three per cent of respondents across all waves of the survey indicated that they were not very supportive or not at all supportive of the NQF.

Figure 1: Level of overall support for the NQF



## Overall burden with administrative requirements of the NQF legislation

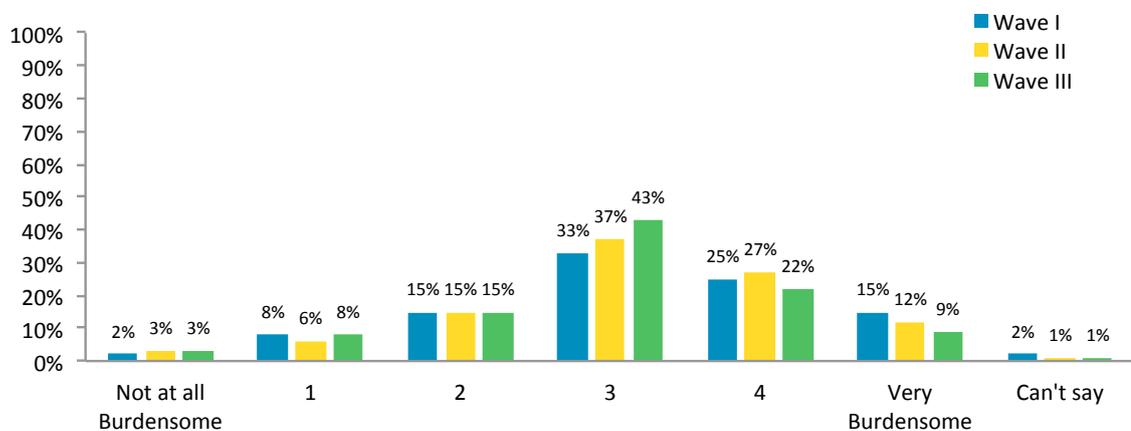
### Overall, how much of a burden are the ongoing administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations? (↓)

A goal of the NQF is to reduce unnecessary administrative burden stemming from duplication and overlap of regulatory schemes. To get a sense of how well the NQF is meeting this goal, respondents were asked to indicate how burdensome they were finding the ongoing administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations. Respondents were provided with a definition of the type of activities that constituted 'administrative requirements' and asked to indicate on a 6 point scale (from '0 = Not at all burdensome' to '5 = Very burdensome'), the level of burden associated with the National Law and Regulations. Respondents could also select 'Can't say'.

**Figure 2** shows that the largest single group of respondents rated overall burden with the administrative requirements at 3 out of 5 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all burdensome and 5 is very burdensome. The figure also shows a steady decline in the proportion of respondents who perceive the administrative requirements to be very burdensome. As can be seen, this proportion declined from 15 per cent in Wave I and 12 per cent in Wave II to nine per cent in Wave III. The proportion of respondents rating the level of burden at 4 has also declined slightly – from 25 per cent in Wave I to 22 per cent in Wave III.

A small but statistically significant decline in the perception of overall burden was observed between Wave I and Wave III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = -0.13$ ) and between Wave II and Wave III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = -0.14$ ).

**Figure 2: Overall burden associated with administrative requirements of National Law and Regulations**



## ■■■ Burden with individual Administrative Requirements

To gain insight into the types of activities that may be impacting on perceptions of overall burden, the survey asked respondents to indicate the level of burden they associate with 12 specific ongoing administrative requirements of the NQF. These administrative requirements are:

**Table 1** indicates that the perception of burden associated with 10 of the 12 individual requirements either decreased or was unchanged over time.

Again, respondents were asked to indicate the level of perceived burden with each of the requirements on a scale from '0 = Not at all burdensome' to '5 = Very burdensome'.

Table 1: Change in the perception of burden with individual administrative requirements over time

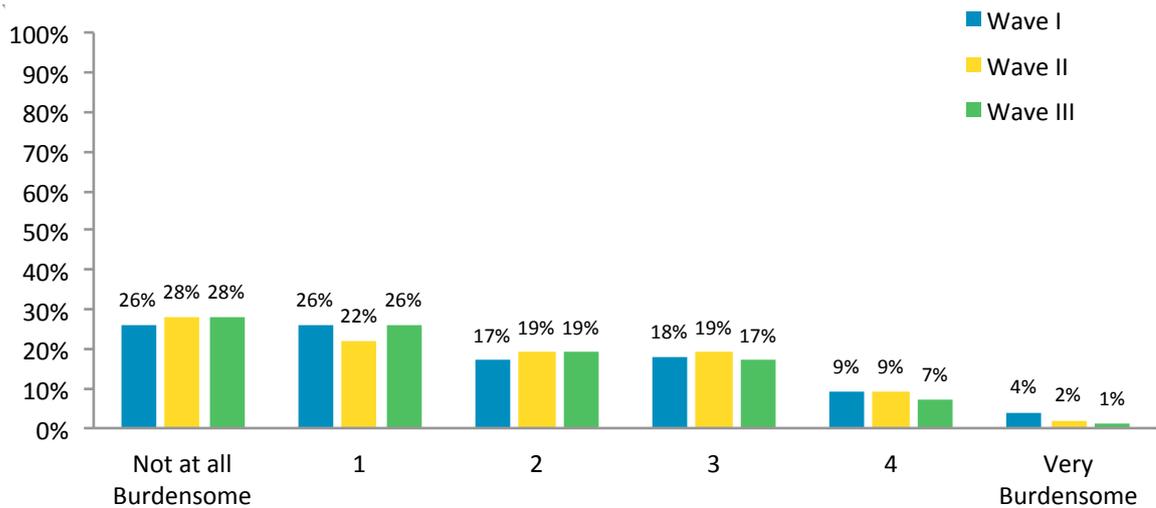
	Direction of change
1. Displaying Information	=
2. Keeping records	=
3. Provider and service approvals	↓
4. Educator qualification assessments	=
5. Supervisor certificates	↓
6. Notifications	=
7. Quality Improvement Plans	=
8. Documenting children's learning	=
9. Maintaining policies and procedures	=
10. Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations	↓
11. Quality assessment and rating visits	↑
12. Applying for a waiver <sup>9</sup>	N/A

<sup>9</sup> Perception of burden with waivers was not tested for statistical significance as it was not included in the Wave I survey.

## 1. Displaying information (=)

**Figure 3** shows that the majority of respondents rated displaying information at the low end of the burdensome scale. Only a small proportion rated this requirement as very burdensome and this proportion appears to have declined slightly over time (down from four per cent in Wave I to one per cent in Wave III). Conversely, more than one quarter of respondents consistently rated this requirement as not at all burdensome across the three waves of the survey.

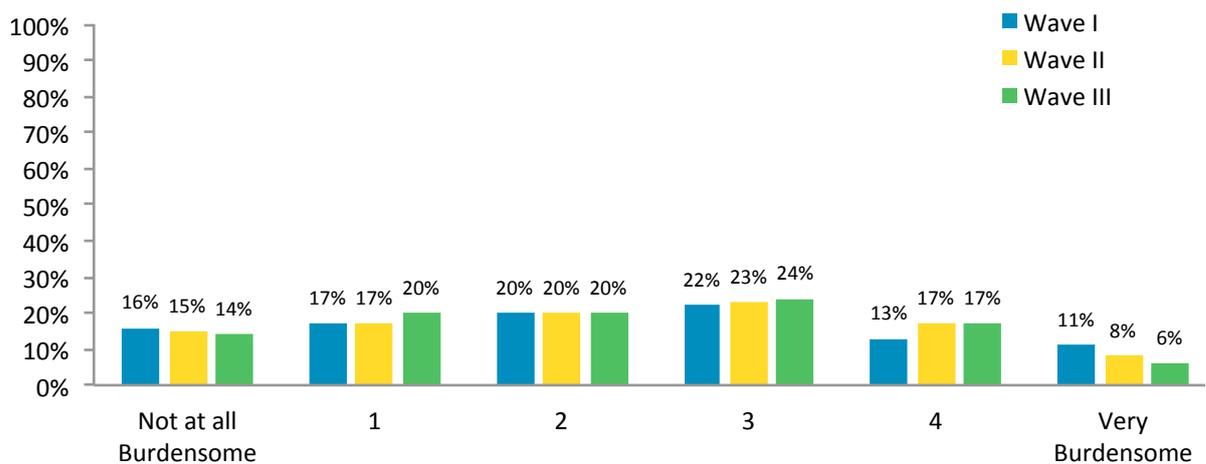
Figure 3: Burden with Displaying information



## 2. Keeping records (=)

There have also been slight declines in the proportion of respondents reporting that Keeping records is very burdensome. As **Figure 4** shows, 11 per cent of respondents in Wave I rated Keeping records as very burdensome compared to six per cent in Wave III. Despite this, there has been a slight increase between Wave I and Wave III in the proportion of respondents who rated burden with keeping records at 4 on the scale.

Figure 4: Burden with Keeping records

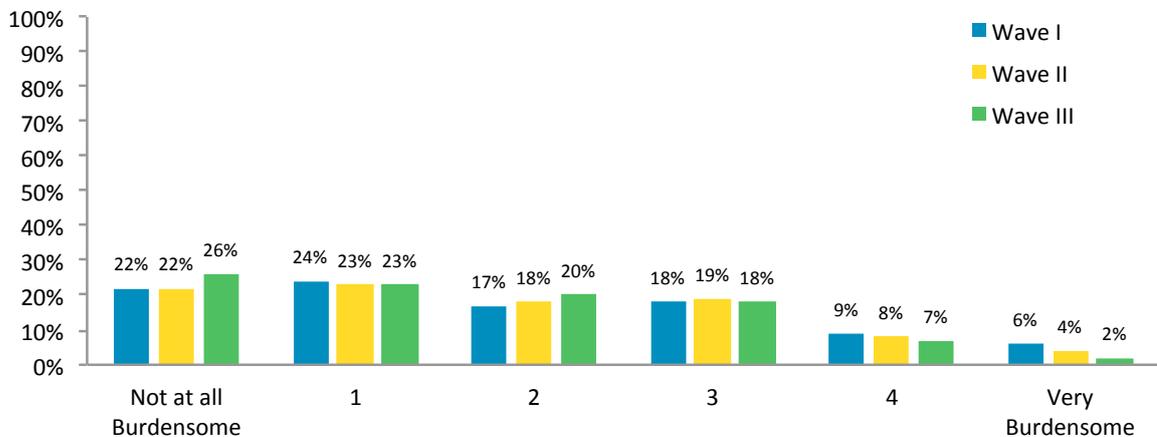


### 3. Provider and service approvals (↓)

The majority of respondents did not appear to find Provider and Service approvals particularly burdensome. **Figure 5** also indicates that the proportion of respondents who rated this requirement as very burdensome has declined from six per cent in Wave I to only two per cent in Wave III. There were also corresponding increases in the proportion of respondents rating this requirement as not at all burdensome – up from 22 per cent in Wave I to 26 per cent in Wave III.

A large significant decline in the perception of burden with Provider and Service approvals was observed between Wave I and Wave III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = -0.53$ ) and between Wave II and Wave III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = -0.14$ ).

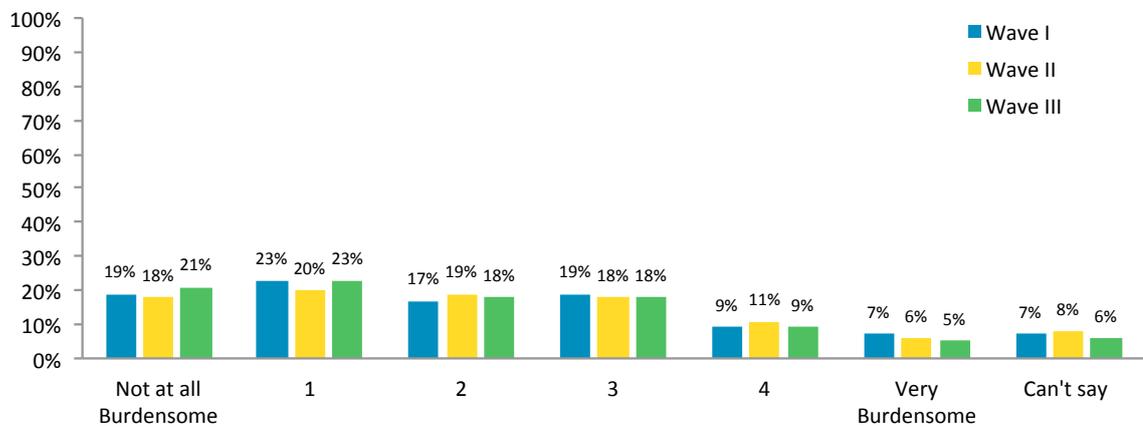
Figure 5: Burden with Provider and service approvals



#### 4. Educator qualification assessments (=)

As **Figure 6** shows, around one fifth of respondents have consistently rated burden with Qualification assessments as not at all burdensome. In Wave III, only five per cent rated this requirement as very burdensome, compared to 21 per cent who rated it as not at all burdensome.

Figure 6: Burden with Educator qualification assessments<sup>10</sup>



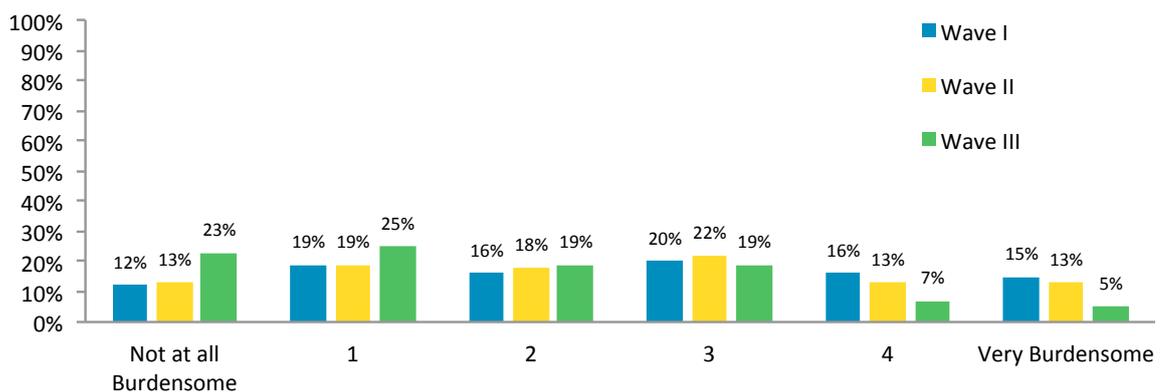
<sup>10</sup> 'Can't say' has been included in the chart if this option was selected by at least four per cent of respondents.

## 5. Supervisor certificates (↓)

**Figure 7** points to a marked decline in the extent to which Supervisor Certificates are considered very burdensome. As can be seen, five per cent rated this requirement as very burdensome in Wave III compared to 15 per cent in Wave I. Correspondingly, there have been increases in the proportion of respondents who rated supervisor certificates as not at all burdensome (up from 12 per cent in Wave I to 23 per cent in Wave III).

A large significant reduction in the perception of burden with this requirement occurred between Wave I and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = -0.42$ ) and between Wave II and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = -0.37$ ).

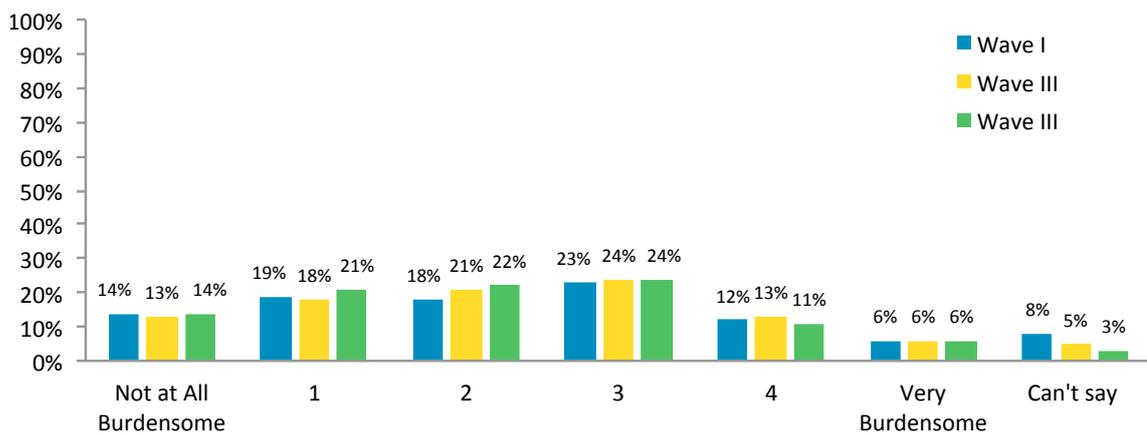
Figure 7: Burden with Supervisor Certificates



## 6. Notifications<sup>11</sup> (=)

**Figure 8** shows that a relatively small proportion of respondents (six per cent) rated Notifications as very burdensome and this proportion has remained constant across all three waves of the survey. Similarly, the proportion rating notifications as not at all burdensome is largely unchanged at 13 or 14 per cent.

Figure 8: Burden with Notifications

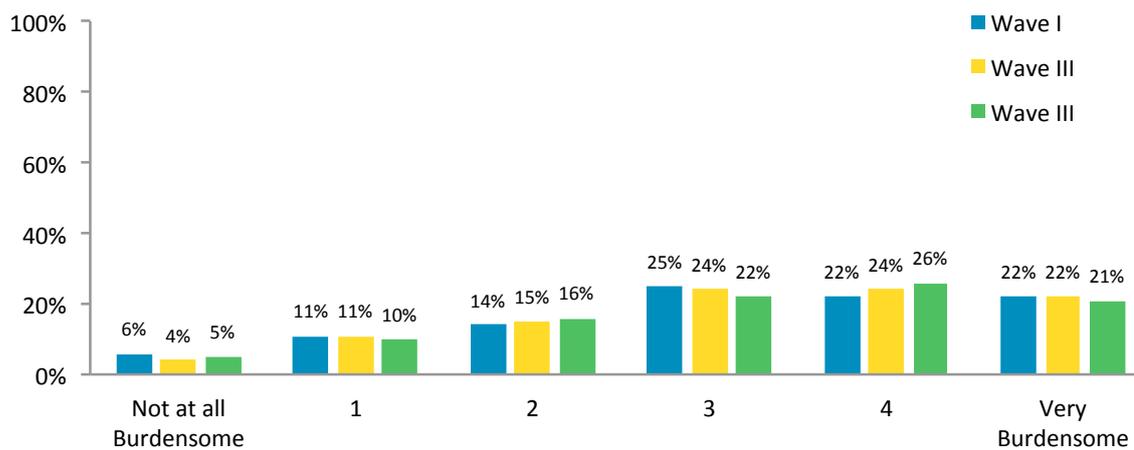


<sup>11</sup> 'Can't say' has been included in the chart if this option was selected by at least four per cent of respondents.

## 7. Quality Improvement Plans (=)

Quality Improvement Plans are the most likely of all the requirements to be consistently rated at the highest end of the burdensome scale. As can be seen in **Figure 9**, more than one fifth of respondents rated Quality Improvement Plans as very burdensome, a proportion that has remained largely constant over the three waves of the survey. In contrast, relatively few respondents perceived Quality Improvement Plans to be not at all burdensome.

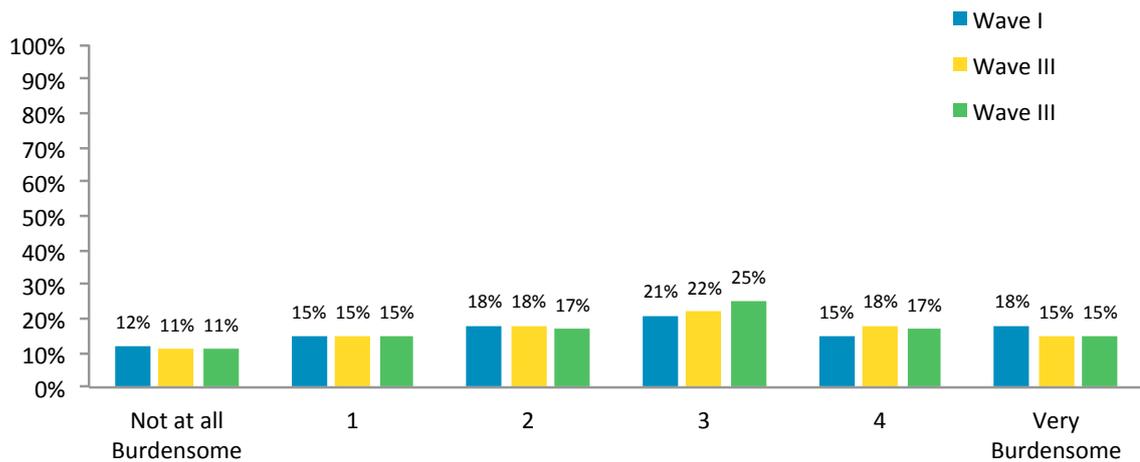
Figure 9: Burden with Quality Improvement Plans



## 8. Documenting children's learning (=)

Reports from respondents indicate that Documenting children's learning continues to be a burden for many respondents. As can be seen in **Figure 10**, 15 percent rated Documenting children's learning as very burdensome in Waves II and III, a very slight decrease on the Wave I proportion of 18 per cent. The proportion who rated Documenting children's learning as not at all burdensome has remained largely consistent at 12 per cent and 11 per cent across the survey waves.

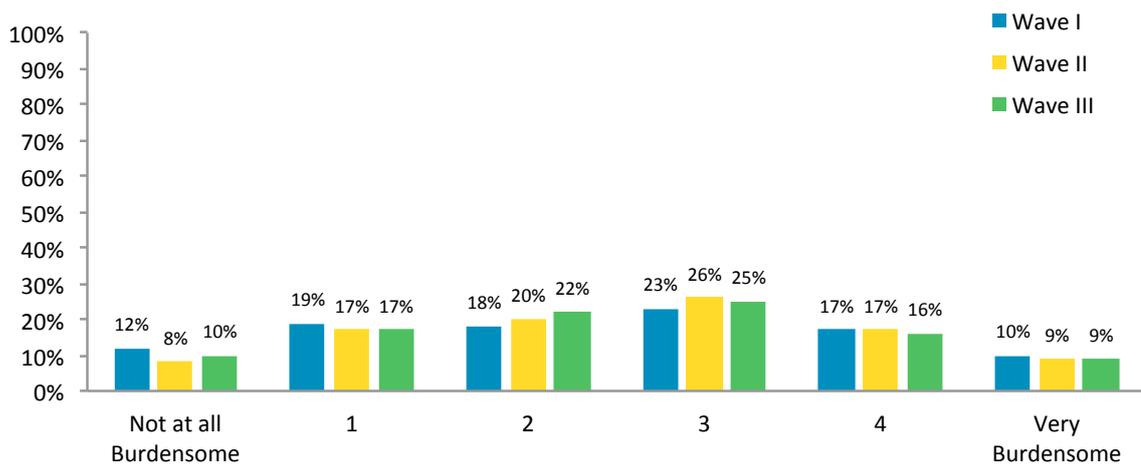
Figure 10: Burden with Documenting children's learning



## 9. Maintaining policies and procedures (=)

As can be seen in **Figure 11**, there has been minimal change in perceptions of burden associated with Maintaining policies and procedures with around one in ten respondents consistently rating this requirement as very burdensome. It should be noted, however, that similar proportions rated Maintaining policies and procedures as not at all burdensome.

Figure 11: Burden with Maintaining policies and procedures

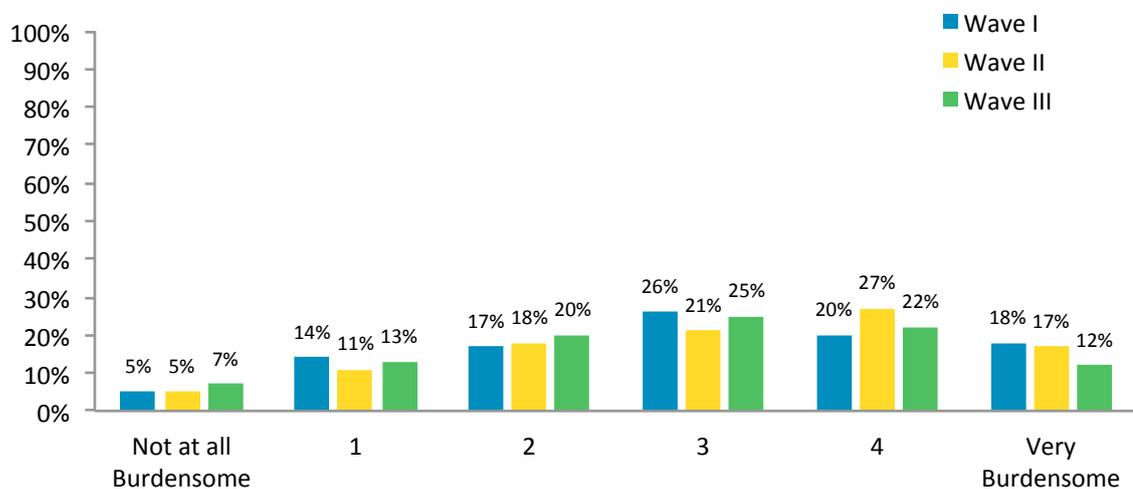


## 10. Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations (↓)

**Figure 12** shows that there have been slight declines over the three waves of the survey in the proportion of respondents who perceive Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations as very burdensome. As can be seen, in Wave I, 18 per cent rated Ensuring staff know about National Law and Regulations as very burdensome compared to 12 per cent in Wave III. In line with this reduction, was a very slight increase in the proportion of respondents that perceive this requirement as not at all burdensome – up from five per cent in Waves 1 and II, to seven per cent in Wave III.

A small yet significant reduction in the perception of burden with this requirement was identified between Wave II and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = 0.13$ ).

Figure 12: Burden with Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations



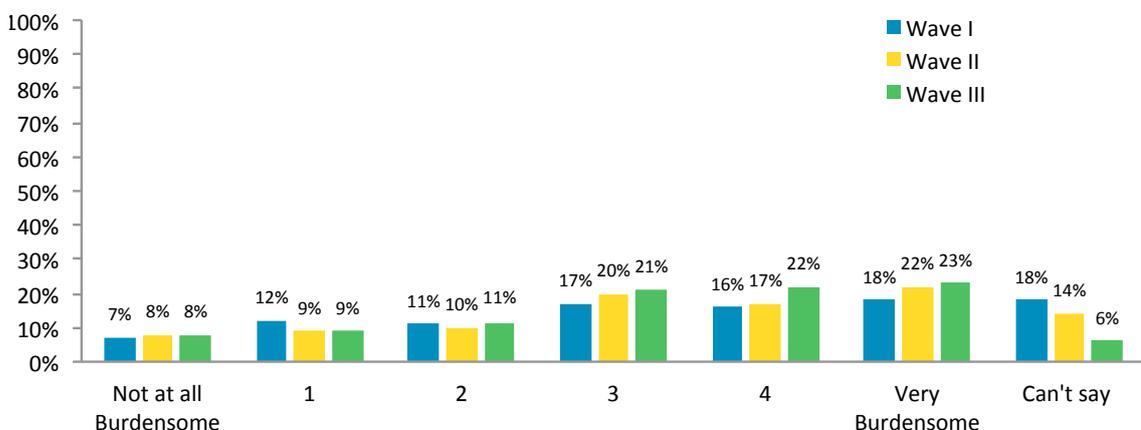
## 11. Quality assessment and ratings visits ↑

In contrast to the other administrative requirements for which perceptions of burden have decreased or remained largely unchanged, perceived burden associated with Quality assessment and ratings visits appears to have increased. **Figure 13** shows that the proportion of respondents rating Quality assessment and ratings visits as very burdensome increased from 18 per cent in Wave I to 23 per cent in Wave III. Similarly, the proportion who rated this requirement at 4 on the scale increased from 16 per cent in Wave I to 22 per cent in Wave III. Conversely, there has been little change across the waves in the proportion of respondents who consider Quality assessment and ratings visits to be not at all burdensome.

A large statistically significant increase in the perception of burden with quality assessment and rating visits was observed between Wave I and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = 0.44$ ).

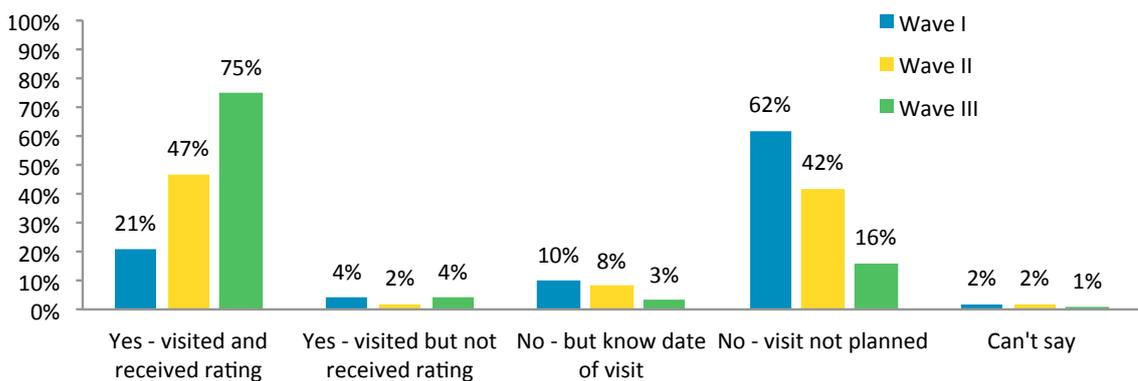
It is worth noting that perceptions of burden have increased despite more respondents having been through a quality assessment and rating visit. As shown in **Figure 14**, the proportion of respondents who have been quality rated rose from around one fifth (21 per cent) in Wave I to three quarters (75 per cent) in Wave III.

Figure 13: Burden with Quality assessment and ratings visits<sup>12</sup>



<sup>12</sup>'Can't say' has been included in the chart if this option was selected by at least four per cent of respondents.

Figure 14: Status of Quality Assessment and Ratings visits



#### Comparison of administrative requirements across Waves I, II and III

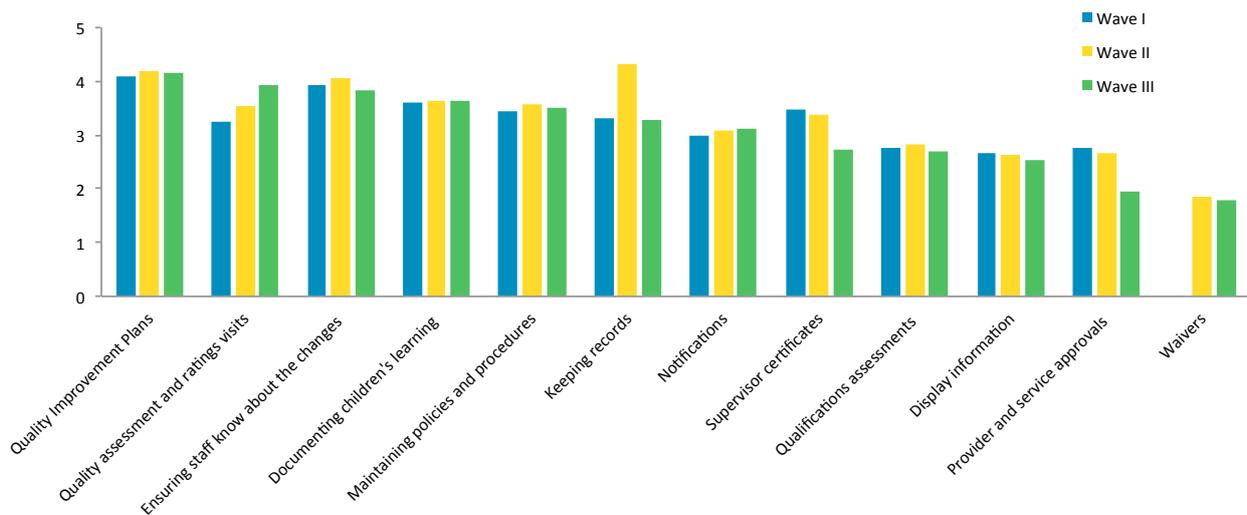
**Figure 15** presents a synthesis of the mean scores for the different administrative requirements over each of the three waves of the study. From the figure it is possible to see firstly, how these scores may have changed over the waves of the study, and secondly, how the requirements rate relative to each other. Data are presented in order of the highest to lowest mean score that was obtained in Wave III.

The figure shows that Quality Improvement Plans is not only the administrative requirement that was perceived as most burdensome in Wave III, but that it has remained consistently the highest throughout all three waves of the survey. Waivers, on the other hand, received the lowest average mean score for both of the study waves in which this requirement was included (Waves II and III).

The figure confirms that for the most part, mean scores for the requirements have decreased over time (particularly Provider and service approvals, and Supervisor certificates), or remain largely unchanged (particularly Quality Improvement Plans, Documenting children's learning, and Notifications). The exception is Quality assessment and ratings visits, for which there has been a gradual increase in mean scores over each successive wave of the study.

Perhaps the most notable result in the chart relates to Keeping records. Although this requirement ranks as moderately burdensome in Wave III, the mean score for this requirement increased considerably between Wave I and Wave II before decreasing just as markedly in Wave III.

Figure 15: Comparison of administrative requirements Waves I, II and III



### Administrative requirements perceived as most burdensome

At each wave of the survey, respondents who rated more than one administrative requirement as highly burdensome (at 4 or 5 out of 5) were asked to indicate which of two or more requirements were the most burdensome. **Table 2** presents the 12 requirements in order of how frequently they were selected in Wave III as being the most burdensome.

As can be seen, the five requirements most commonly cited as being most burdensome in Wave III were Quality Improvement Plans, Quality assessment and ratings visits, Documenting children's learning, Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations, and Maintaining policies and procedures. In comparison, relatively small proportions of respondents rated requirements such as Keeping records and Notifications as most burdensome.

Table 2: Most burdensome administrative requirement in order of frequency

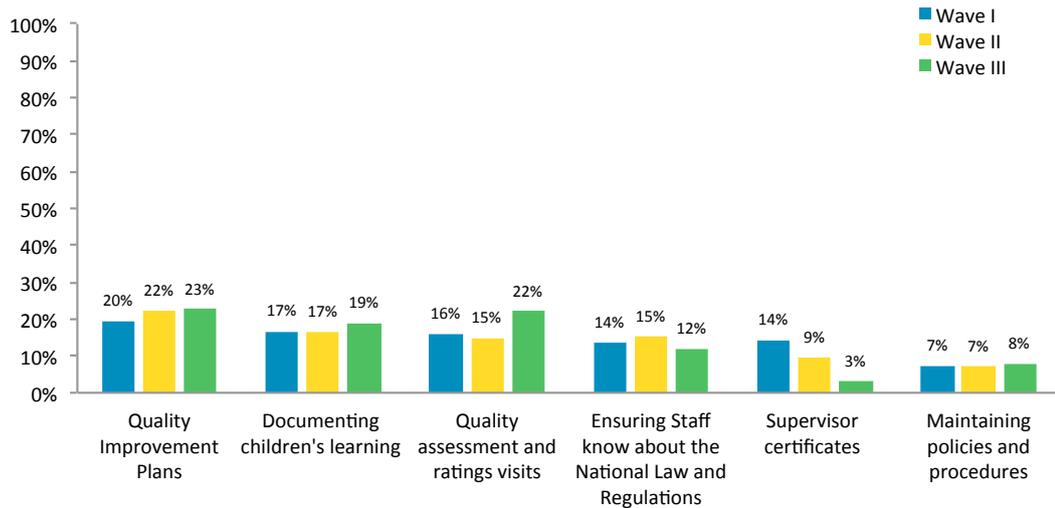
Administrative requirement	Wave III
Quality Improvement Plans	23%
Quality assessment and ratings visits	22%
Documenting children's learning	19%
Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations	12%
Maintaining policies and procedures	8%
Supervisor certificates	3%
Keeping records	2%
Educator qualification assessments	2%
Notifications	2%
Display information	2%
Waivers	1%
Provider and service approvals	0%

Change in perceptions of burden over time is most notable with quality assessment and rating visits and supervisor certificates. As evident in **Figure 16**, there has been an increase from 16 per cent in Wave I and 15 per cent in Wave II to 22 per cent in Wave III in the proportion of respondents rating quality assessment and rating visits as the most burdensome requirement.

In contrast, the proportion rating supervisor certificates as the most burdensome requirement decreased from 14 per cent in Wave I and nine per cent in Wave II to three per cent in Wave III.

Declines are also evident for ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations which declined from 15 per cent in Wave II to 12 per cent in Wave III.

Figure 16: Six most burdensome administrative requirements



### Underlying factors associated with burden with Quality assessment and ratings visits

The previous sections discuss perceived burden associated with individual administrative requirements. Respondents were also asked about why they believed quality assessment and ratings visits were highly burdensome. This section discusses these results.

To identify which particular tasks underscore perceived burden associated with quality and assessment ratings visits, respondents who rated this requirement at 4 or 5 out of 5 were asked to select from a list of discrete tasks those they consider to be a burden. **Table 3** presents these tasks and the proportions of respondents in Waves II and III who selected them.

As can be seen, the tasks most frequently selected by respondents in both Waves II and III were Preparing paperwork for the visit (e.g. preparing QIPs, updating and collating documentation of children's learning) and Preparing staff for the visit. The second and third most commonly selected tasks were Participating in the review process and Preparing the service environment.

**Table 3** shows that there has been little change between Waves II and III in the proportions of respondents who perceive the various tasks as a burden. The only notable exception is the increase from 8 per cent in Wave II to 12 per cent in Wave III in the proportion of respondents who perceive Facilitating the visit on the day of the assessment to be a burden (see page 56 for further discussion about underlying factors relating to burden associated with quality assessment and rating visits).

Table 3: Specific tasks that make Quality assessment and ratings visits a burden

Administrative requirement	Wave II	Wave III
Preparing paperwork for the visit (e.g. preparing QIPs, updating and collating documentation)	24%	22%
Preparing staff for the visit	24%	22%
Participating in the review process	10%	12%
Preparing the service environment for the visit	13%	11%
Facilitating the visit on the day of the assessment	8%	12%
Interpreting assessment and ratings reports	8%	9%
Communicating to families about the visit	8%	8%
Communicating the rating to families	5%	3%

## Attitudes towards the National Law and Regulations

In order to understand more about the impact of the National Law and Regulations on service providers and nominated supervisors, respondents were presented with a series of statements and asked about the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or otherwise with the statement on a scale from 1 to 5 where:

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Somewhat disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 = Somewhat agree
- 5 = Strongly agree

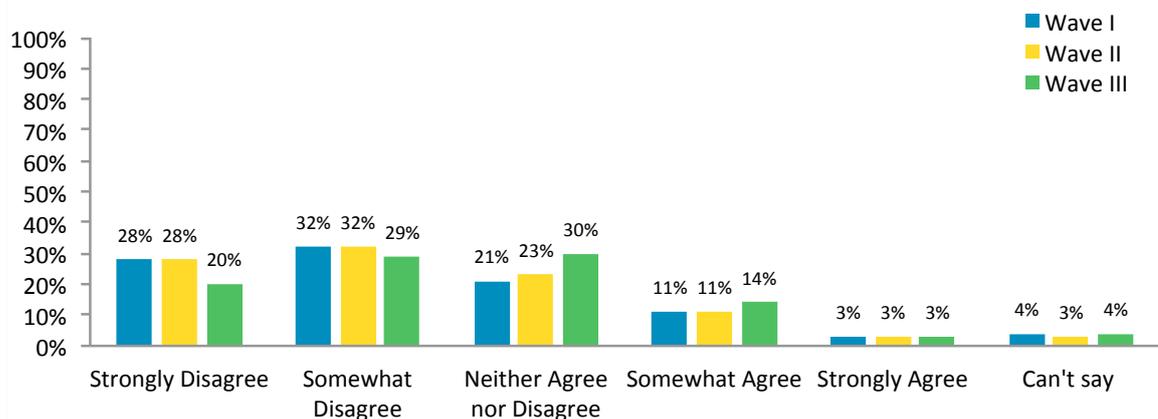
Respondents could also select 'Can't say/not applicable'. Responses to two of these statements are described as follows.

## Administrative burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations

As shown in **Figure 17**, the majority of respondents do not agree that administrative burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations. That said, there has been a notable decrease (from 28 per cent in Waves I and II to 20 per cent in Wave III) in the proportion of respondents who strongly disagreed that burden has reduced. There has also been a slight increase between Wave I and Wave III and Wave II and Wave III in the proportion of respondents who somewhat agreed that burden has reduced.

There was a small yet significant increase the attitude that administrative burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations between Wave I and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = 0.23$ ) and between Wave II and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = 0.20$ ).

Figure 17: Level of agreement that burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations<sup>13</sup>



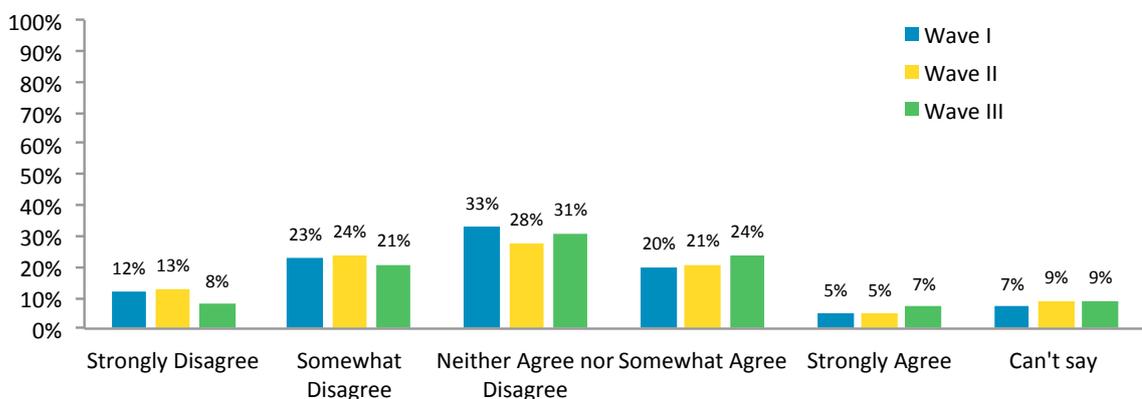
<sup>13</sup> 'Can't say' has been included in the chart if this option was selected by at least four per cent of respondents.

## The administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations are simpler than the previous licensing and accreditation systems

Responses to this statement have remained reasonably consistent over the three waves of the study with the largest proportion of respondents neither agreeing nor disagreeing that administrative requirements associated with the National Law and Regulations are simpler than those of previous systems. The most notable change across the waves has been the decline in the proportion of respondents who strongly disagreed with the statement. As shown in **Figure 18**, 12 per cent of respondents in Wave I and 13 per cent of respondents in Wave II strongly disagreed that the new system is simpler. In Wave III, this proportion declined to eight per cent. There has also been a slight increase in the proportions of respondents who strongly agreed that the new system is simpler. In Wave III, seven per cent of respondents agreed with this statement, compared with five per cent in previous waves.

There was a small yet significant increase in attitude that administrative burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations between Wave I and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = 0.12$ ) and between Wave II and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = 0.15$ ).

Figure 18: Level of agreement that the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations are simpler than the previous licensing and accreditation systems<sup>14</sup>



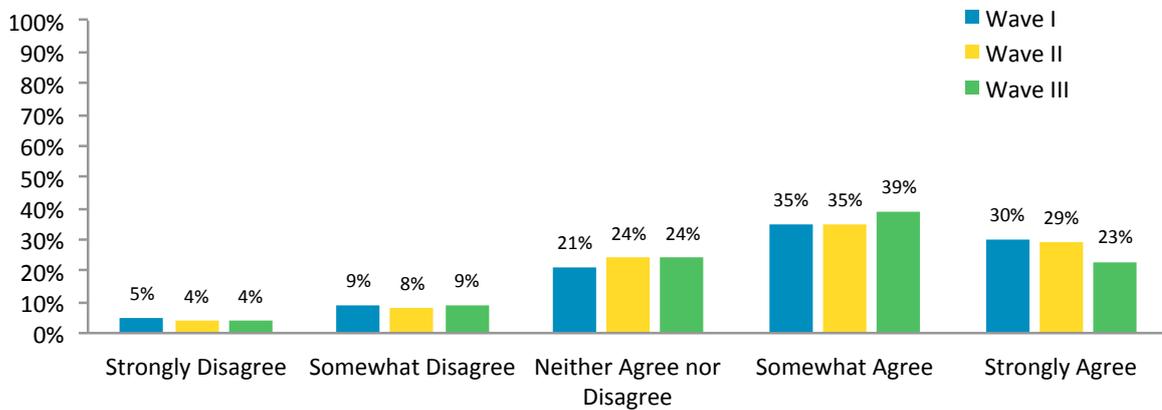
<sup>14</sup>'Can't say' has been included in the chart if this option was selected by at least four per cent of respondents.

## I feel I am doing more work than necessary to make sure that I meet the requirements of the National Law and Regulations

As shown in **Figure 19**, the majority of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that they are doing more work than necessary to meet the requirements of the National Law and Regulations. In Wave III, 39 per cent of respondents somewhat agreed with this statement, a slight increase on the Wave I and Wave II proportions of 35 per cent. In contrast, there was a slight decrease in Wave III in the proportion of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement (down to 23 per cent from 30 per cent in Wave I and 29 per cent in Wave II).

Significance testing confirmed a small decrease in the proportion of respondents who feel that they are doing more work than necessary between Wave I and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = -0.11$ ) and Wave II and III ( $p < 0.00$ ,  $d = -0.16$ ).

Figure 19: Level of agreement that the more work than necessary is being done to ensure that the requirements of the National Law and Regulations are met



## How useful would the following changes be in reducing administrative burden for your organisation/ service under the National Law and Regulations?

Respondents were presented with a list of initiatives and were asked to indicate on a scale from 0 to 5 (where 0 = Not at all useful and 5 = Very useful), how useful each of these changes would be in reducing administrative burden. Respondents were also offered the option of selecting 'Can't say'. These initiatives and the results from the total group of respondents to the Wave III sample (n = 2482) are presented below.

As can be seen in **Table 4**, there was widespread support for all of the initiatives with between 30 – 40 per cent of respondents indicating that they would be Very useful (rating them at 5). Respondents appeared to be particularly supportive of initiatives involving direct contact with around six in ten rating more or improved face to face training and face to face guidance at 4 or 5 on the scale. There was slightly less support for more or improved online training.

Table 4: Perceived usefulness of changes in reducing administrative burden

	Not at all useful	1	2	3	4	Very useful	Can't say
More or improved face to face training	3%	6%	9%	20%	21%	40%	2%
More or improved face to face guidance	3%	6%	9%	21%	21%	38%	2%
More consistency between the requirements of different states and territories	4%	4%	6%	16%	15%	38%	16%
More or improved written guidance materials	3%	5%	9%	22%	23%	36%	1%
More or improved online guidance	4%	6%	9%	23%	23%	34%	2%
Improved processing of applications, enquiries etc.	2%	5%	8%	25%	21%	33%	6%
More or improved online training	5%	7%	10%	22%	21%	32%	2%

## ■ ■ ■ Respondent suggestions for reducing administrative burden

The final item in the survey was an open-ended question that asked – *Do you have any other suggestions for how to reduce administrative burden under the National Law and Regulations without compromising the quality of education and care for children?*

Comments from respondents were examined to identify major themes to emerge at each survey wave. Analysis was based on comments from all participants who responded to the question. In cases where respondents offered multiple suggestions, the first suggestion was selected.

**Table 5** presents the number of respondents who commented on the question at each wave of the survey along with the number of themes to emerge.

■ ■ ■ Table 5: Number of respondents' suggestions and themes for reducing administrative burden

Survey Wave	Number who responded to question	Number of themes to emerge from comments
Wave I	970	18
Wave II	624	20
Wave III	292	19

**Table 6** sets out the themes to emerge from the comments at each wave and ranks them numerically according to how frequently they were made. As shown in the table, the primary themes common to all three survey waves were:

- Streamline administrative duties
- Clearer guidelines
- Greater consistency from regulatory authority/Government
- More financial support particularly for hiring and training support staff.

Other main themes that commonly emerged across the three waves were:

- More time spent with children and families
- Developing regulations and guidelines that are unique to OSHC.

A comparison of themes to emerge over the three survey waves provides some insight into how priorities and issues may have changed as providers have become accustomed to working with the National Law and Regulations. For instance, in Wave I, More time to understand the NQF ranked seven among the themes but by Wave III dropped to 14 in rank. The QIP on the other hand, has become increasingly topical across the Waves. In Wave I, this suggestion ranked at 14 but has risen steadily over the waves to rank nine in Wave II and five by Wave III. Similarly, developing regulations and guidelines that are unique to OSHC was ranked eighth in Wave III but rose to rank five in Wave III.

From Wave I to Wave III, some interesting changes in themes occurred with several themes not re-emerging in Wave II or III. These were:

- More informed about latest news and developments
- Sign in /out considerations
- Less accountability /more contact time
- Waiver concern.

As shown in **Table 6**, obsolete themes from Wave I were replaced in Wave II by nine new themes. Of these new themes, five (Greater clarity around National Law and Regulations, Service support person/leader, Documenting children's learning a burden, Expand use of ACECQA website, and Volunteer committees paperwork concern) did not re-emerge in Wave III indicating that they were issues that had been resolved or no longer such a concern. Four of the nine themes re-emerged in Wave III:

- Greater AO consistency
- Serious incident consistency
- Improve NQA ITS process
- Greater support for rural/remote areas.

Table 6: Themes to emerge from respondents' suggestions for reducing administrative burden

Suggestion	Rank in Wave I	Rank in Wave II	Rank in Wave III
Streamline administrative duties	1	5	4
Clearer guidelines	2	1	1
Greater consistency from RA/Government	3	3	2
More financial support particularly for hiring and training support staff	4	2	3
More training and support	5	4	6
More time spent with children and families	6	6	7
More time to understand the NQF	7		14
Developing regulations and guidelines that are unique to OSHC	8	8	5
Supervisor certificate concern	9	10	
Quicker response applications/compliance/notifications	10	12	
Best practice examples	11	14	
Better support for NESB	12		17
More informed about latest news and developments	13		
QIP concern	14	9	8
Reassurance centres are doing the right thing	15		18
Sign in /out considerations	16		
Less accountability/more contact time	17		
Waiver concern	18		

Table 6: Themes to emerge from respondents' suggestions for reducing administrative burden (continued)

Suggestion	Rank in Wave I	Rank in Wave II	Rank in Wave III
Greater AO consistency		7	9
Greater clarity National Law and regulations		11	
Service support person/leader		13	
Documenting children's learning burden		15	
Expand use of ACECQA website		16	
Volunteer committees paperwork concern		17	
Serious incident consistency		18	15
Improve NQA ITS process		19	12
Greater support for rural /remote areas		20	13

## Summary of findings

Analysis of survey responses across the three waves of the study highlighted a number of positive findings. Significant declines were confirmed between Waves 1 and III and Waves II and III in the proportions of respondents who disagreed that, since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations, administrative burden has reduced and the administrative requirements are simpler.

Significant declines were also observed between Waves I and III and Waves II and III for:

- Perception of overall burden
- Perception of burden with supervisor certificates

In addition, there was a significant decline between Wave II and Wave III in the proportion of respondents who rated Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations as very burdensome.

Perceptions of burden associated with other requirements have remained largely unchanged from previous survey waves. These requirements are:

- Qualifications assessments
- Notifications
- Maintaining policies and procedures
- Documenting children's learning
- Quality Improvement Plans
- Displaying Information
- Provider and service approvals
- Keeping Records

There was also no change in respondents' level of support for the NQF which has remained consistently very high.

Contrary to the other requirements, perceptions of burden associated with Quality Assessment and Ratings visits increased between Wave I and Wave III. During this period, the proportion of services that have been quality rated has risen from around one fifth to three quarters. According to respondents, the two most burdensome tasks associated with the visits were preparing paperwork for the visit (e.g. preparing QIPs, updating and collating documentation) and preparing staff for the visit.

Respondents indicated widespread support for a range of changes that could help ameliorate burden. The most popular of these were more or improved face to face training and guidance, and more or improved written guidance and materials.

Respondents also offered numerous suggestions for reducing administrative burden. While these suggestions changed over the three waves of the survey, several suggestions remained the same. The most commonly noted of these included clearer guidelines, streamlining administrative duties, financial support for staff, more training and support, greater consistency from RA and Government, and developing regulations and guidelines that are unique to OSHC.

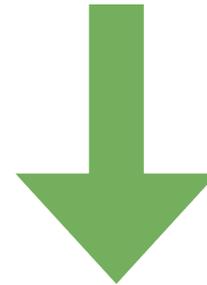
## 3. Discussion of results

### ■ ■ ■ Perceptions of overall burden have reduced



#### OVERALL BURDEN

Overall burden has decreased over time



#### DECREASE IN BURDEN

A positive finding from the study is the statistically significant reduction since Wave I in the perception of overall burden. This was the case between Wave I and Wave III and between Wave II and Wave III of the study.

In support of this overarching finding, there have also been positive changes in perceptions of the National Law and Regulations across the three waves of the study. In particular, there have been improvements (between Waves I and III and between Waves II and III) in responses toward the following statements:

- Significantly more people agreed that administrative burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations
- Significantly more people agreed that the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations are simpler than the previous licensing and accreditation systems
- Significantly fewer people felt that they were doing more work than necessary to make sure that they meet the requirements of the National Law and Regulations.

This result supports one of the original goals of the NQF that in addition to raising the quality of education and care services, the streamlined framework would also reduce the administrative and compliance burden for service providers over time as the sector become more familiar with the requirements of the new system<sup>15,16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup>Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden, 2013, Appendix D: Standard Cost Model (SCM) Report, pg. Di, <http://www.scseec.edu.au/site/DefaultSite/filesystem/documents/Reports%20and%20publications/Publications/ACECQA%20Research%20Report%20on%20the%20NQF%20and%20Regulatory%20Burden%20-%20Combined.pdf>

<sup>16</sup>Note that any further amendments to the National Law and Regulations, such as those proposed through the 2014 COAG Review, may impact on perceptions of administrative burden in the future.

## ■ ■ ■ Burden associated with individual administrative requirements

While overall burden has reduced since Wave I, the results vary in terms of the relative burden associated with specific ongoing administrative requirements.

In the majority of cases, the burden associated with the ongoing administrative requirements has shown no significant change between waves (that is, it has remained consistently low, moderate or high) and/or has had little or no influence on perceptions of burden over time. However, there has been a statistically significant change in the perception of overall burden between survey waves for four of the twelve ongoing administrative requirements. Three of these requirements were associated with statistically significant reductions in perceived burden in Wave III, and one requirement showed a statistically significant increase in perceived burden in Wave III.

The following sections discuss these results in more detail, with a particular focus on the one administrative requirement where there was a statistically significant increase in perceived burden – quality assessment and rating visits. This is followed by an overview of recent and ongoing initiatives and reviews aimed at improving the quality assessment and rating process, and a discussion of future directions, including recommendations for ongoing and future action to further streamline the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations.

### Requirements where administrative burden has decreased

Of the twelve ongoing administrative requirements tested for significance, the following three requirements were associated with statistically significant reductions in perceived burden in Wave III:

- Supervisor certificates
- Provider and service approvals
- Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations.

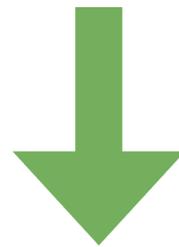
These administrative requirements are discussed in more detail below

## Supervisor certificates



### SUPERVISOR CERTIFICATES

Burden with supervisor certificates has decreased over time



**DECREASE IN BURDEN**

The perceived burden associated with supervisor certificates showed statistically significant declines between Wave I and Wave III and between Wave II and Wave III, with the largest effect occurring between Waves I and III.

The significant decline in perceived burden associated with supervisor certificates is unsurprising as this administrative requirement of the National Law and Regulations has been a key area of focus of changes agreed by Ministers and implemented in June 2014 to streamline the supervisor certificate application process in all states and territories (except Western Australia). The recent amendments expand the class of 'prescribed persons' so that the majority of people no longer need to apply to the regulatory authority for a supervisor certificate. This has the practical effect of making supervisor certificates largely redundant. These changes respond to sector feedback about the supervisor certificate application process, including through Wave I of the administrative burden study, and were aimed at minimising paperwork associated with supervisor certificates as far as possible<sup>17</sup>.

Some jurisdictions report however that they continue to receive applications for supervisor certificates. Governments have consulted on a regulatory change proposal which would remove supervisor certificate requirements from the National Law. Approved providers would have the sole responsibility to make their own assessment of a person's suitability for supervising the service according to guidance produced, reducing the current duplication between regulatory authorities and providers in making an assessment of whether a person is suitable to be in charge of a service.

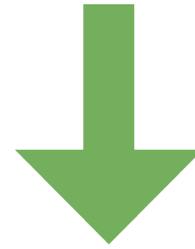
<sup>17</sup>Information sheet – Changes to supervisor certificate application requirements, ACECQA website, accessed 25 August 2015.

## Provider and service approvals



### SERVICE APPROVALS

Burden with service approvals has decreased over time



**DECREASE IN BURDEN**

Provider and service approvals showed significant declines in perceived burden between Wave I and Wave III.

This may be partly explained by changes to the National Quality Agenda IT System (NQA ITS) introduced in 2014 to improve the functionality of the NQA ITS portal and simplify engagement with the system for both sector and regulatory authority users. These improvements included a suite of re-designed application forms that are easier to read and faster to complete and provider training by the NQA ITS team. In the six months to September 2014, these improvements to the NQA ITS led to an increase of over 600 providers who have accounts in the NQA ITS and a 43 per cent increase in the number of portal users submitting forms online, reducing the paperwork burden for both providers and regulatory authorities<sup>18</sup>.

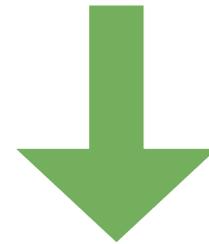
<sup>18</sup>Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Progress on the Implementation Plan for the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care, November 2014, pg.35.

## Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations



### STAFF KNOWLEDGE

Burden with staff  
knowledge has decreased  
over time



**DECREASE IN BURDEN**

Between Waves II and III, there was a significant decline in the perceived burden associated with Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations. This is supported by the descriptive statistics which show that there is a noticeable decline between Wave II and Wave III in the proportion of respondents rating the requirement as very burdensome (**Figure 12**).

Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations was identified as one of the key drivers of administrative burden in the Wave I report<sup>19</sup>. At the time, the NQF was still relatively new and the sector was transitioning to the new requirements. The decline in perceived burden for this requirement could be attributed to improved familiarity with the regulatory framework and processes, as predicted in the Wave I study<sup>20</sup>.

The Wave I findings resulted in a series of recommendations relating to setting clearer expectations and improving communication about administrative requirements in order to achieve reductions in stress, frustration, time, complexity and compliance costs associated with the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations, and to improve understanding and increase certainty among the sector<sup>21</sup>. The results in Wave III suggest that these measures have also contributed to a decline in perceived burden with this requirement.

<sup>19</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden, 2013, pg.104.

<sup>20</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden, 2013, pg.11.

<sup>21</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden Part 2: Recommendations, November 2013, pg.17-21.

## Requirements where administrative burden has increased

Of the twelve ongoing administrative requirements, only Quality assessment and rating visits showed a statistically significant increase in perceived burden in Wave III.

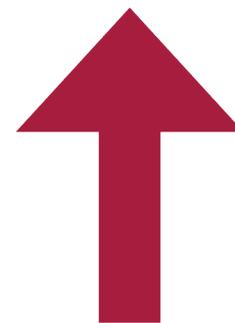
The increase was statistically significant between Wave I and Wave III, and with a large effect. This is supported by the trends apparent in the descriptive statistics, where the proportion of respondents who rated Quality assessment and ratings visits at the higher end of the burdensome scale increased from around one-third in Wave I to more than half in Wave III, and where there was little change across the waves in the proportion of respondents who consider quality assessment and ratings visits to be not at all burdensome.

### Quality assessment and rating visits



#### ASSESSMENT AND RATING VISITS

Burden with assessment and rating visits has increased over time  
Activities contributing to this increase are preparing staff and preparing paperwork



**INCREASE IN BURDEN**

Both the significance testing and the descriptive statistics highlighted that the perceived burden associated with quality assessment and rating visits has significantly increased in Wave III compared to Wave I.

Analysis of the particular tasks that underscore perceived burden associated with quality assessment and rating visits in Wave III showed that the following two tasks in particular rated most highly:

- preparing paperwork for the visit (e.g. preparing QIPs, updating and collating documentation)
- preparing staff for the visit.

Linked to quality and assessment and ratings visits are two other administrative requirements – quality improvement plans (QIPs), and documenting children's learning. Perceived burden associated with these requirements remains persistently high.

Aside from the quantum of paperwork, there are a range of reasons why perceived burden associated with these requirements remains persistently high. For example, while both activities involve paperwork and record keeping, the work involves a high level of reflection and critical thinking and is not simply form filling. QIPs are required to be updated at least annually, and this involves prioritising areas for improvement to be included.

For example, NQS Element 1.2.1 (cycle of planning) is an element that some services find difficult to meet in the assessment and rating process. Documenting children's learning is one part of this process. The NQS provides flexibility and does not mandate how educators meet this important aspect of the planning cycle, and methods can include observations, photographs of child engagement, learning stories and samples of children's work. The focus of the assessment is not how much documentation a service has, but rather how it is used to inform planning to extend children's thinking and learning and to reflect on pedagogy and practice. This is a key message reinforced to the sector in the recent national workshops, presentations and through social media and newsletter articles.

It is possible that the level of perceived burden associated with this administrative requirement is associated with how services are opting to record children's learning. Another possible explanation is that as perceived burden associated with supervisor certificates and other approvals has fallen, the residual perceived burden of QIPs has grown in relative terms. The result suggests that the assessment and rating visits continues to be a source of administrative burden for services and providers, relative to other requirements.

The standard cost model assessment conducted as part of the Wave I survey found that documenting educational programs and assessing children's learning are the costliest ongoing administrative activities. Importantly however, this assessment also reported that providers generally consider these activities generate at least an equivalent increase in the quality of education and care. It is expected that providers continue to hold this view.

## Policy initiatives and reviews of the Quality Assessment and Rating process

A number of changes were made to the assessment and rating process in 2014 to speed up the rate of assessment and rating and reduce complexity. These included operational policy changes and Regulation amendments<sup>22</sup>.

A broader review of Assessment and Rating and the National Quality Standard (NQS) has been conducted as part of the 2014 COAG Review. At the time of writing, the 2014 COAG Review had not been finalised, but the Review includes options<sup>23</sup> that have direct relevance to the findings of this study, and that may have implications for any future directions.

These policy initiatives and reviews are discussed in more detail below.

### ***Operational policy changes to the assessment and rating process***

In April 2014, governments agreed to operational changes to the assessment and rating process to speed up the rate of assessment and rating visits and reduce the time, complexity and perceived burden associated with preparing for quality assessment visits, as reported in the Wave I report<sup>24</sup>. These included:

- shortening quality rating scheduling timeframes – this addressed feedback by regulatory authorities that the length of the 12 week notice period for quality assessment may be unnecessarily adding to provider and educator effort and stress associated with assessment and rating
- streamlining the format for quality rating reports to education and care providers – feedback indicates that the new template has been well-received by providers<sup>25</sup>
- clarifying for education and care providers how best to provide feedback on draft quality rating reports
- clarifying for education and care providers how much time regulatory authorities allocate to an assessment and rating visit
- improving guidelines to streamline first tier rating reviews.

### ***2014 Regulation amendments***

The recent 2014 regulation amendments included a change so that services no longer need to send a copy of their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to their regulatory authority within three months of being granted service approval, and instead may submit the QIP to their regulatory authority on request.

<sup>22</sup> Note that the effects of these changes would only be evident for services assessed from mid-2014 onwards, when the first of these changes were implemented.

<sup>23</sup> Note that decisions on these recommendations are expected to be made by Ministers in late 2015 and implemented from June 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden, 2013, pg.12; Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden Part 2: Recommendations, November 2013, p.20.

<sup>25</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Progress on the Implementation Plan for the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care, November 2014, pg.21.

### ***2014 COAG Review of Assessment and Rating and the National Quality Standard***

Since implementing the operational changes in 2014, a broader review of Assessment and Rating and the NQS has been conducted as part of the 2014 COAG Review. The main aims of this review are to:

- improve the transparency and efficiency of the quality assessment and rating process
- develop longer-term options for refining the NQS and quality rating levels.

The longer-term review of the NQS and rating levels aligns with the Wave I recommendations aimed at simplifying the NQS<sup>26</sup>.

The options to emerge from the Review are partly in response to issues raised by stakeholders during the public consultation process undertaken as part of the Review.

To enable the sector and families to provide feedback on the implementation and operation of the NQF, including how it may be improved stakeholders raised a number of issues concerning the effectiveness of implementation of quality assessment and rating, including:

- the efficiency and costs of implementation and progress of quality rating visits
- the burdens imposed on education and care providers from participating in and complying with the assessment and rating processes<sup>27</sup>.

In response to these issues, the findings of the Review include options to:

- streamline the national approach to assessment and rating to make assessment and rating more efficient and transparent, including through the redevelopment of supporting templates and documents including the QIP, the authorised officer's Assessment Instrument, and the written Ratings Report
- reduce the complexity of the NQS, for example, by reducing the number of standards and elements.

The option to streamline the national approach to assessment and rating received high levels of sector support overall with submissions in particular being overwhelmingly positive. The proposed change is that the streamlined process will be clearly defined through supporting templates and documents and further rigorous training of authorised officers. As well as cost savings generated from having a streamlined, less burdensome system, there would also be benefits where the pace of the assessment and rating process is accelerated. That is, improvements in the timeliness of assessments would see the information that this process generates available to parents sooner and

<sup>26</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden Part 2: Recommendations, November 2013, pg.6.

<sup>27</sup> Woolcott Research Pty Ltd, Summary of findings from the 2014 National Quality Framework Review Consultation Process, October 2014, pg.4

the quality benefits it generates for services would materialise earlier<sup>28</sup>.

The option to reduce the complexity of the NQS could have time and cost savings for the sector in preparing for an assessment and rating visit and complying with requirements on an ongoing basis.

Once outcomes of the 2014 COAG Review are known, it will be possible to consider the findings of this study in light of the reform options adopted from the 2014 COAG Review. Once these reform options are implemented, it will be important to continue ongoing monitoring of provider and service level experiences of administrative burden in relation to the NQF. A particular focus of this ongoing monitoring will be on whether a more streamlined approach to assessment and rating leads to reductions in perceived levels of administrative burden.

<sup>28</sup> Education Council, Regulation Impact Statement for proposed options for changes to the National Quality Framework, COAG Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement, November 2014, pp.27-28.

## Other ACECQA led initiatives

In the Wave I report, two other administrative requirements that are closely related to quality assessment and rating visits were identified as particularly burdensome – QIPs and Documenting children's learning.

The report found that requirements that are expressed in broad terms, such as Documenting children's learning, can be helpful in giving providers flexibility in compliance, supporting an outcomes-focused approach, and accommodating differences between service operating environments. However, the SCM assessment and perception survey identified that providers find some of these broadly defined administrative requirements difficult to understand<sup>29</sup>. Further, the report found that providers that were used to considerable documentation requirements (such as those under the former National Childcare Accreditation Council regulatory system) may be more inclined to assume that a similar amount of documentation is required under the NQF<sup>30</sup>. In the SCM assessment, this was illustrated through widely divergent costs reported by providers<sup>31</sup>.

This Wave I finding resulted in recommendations to publish clearer guidance on developing and maintaining QIPs and Documenting child assessments or evaluations for delivery of the program<sup>32</sup>. In response to these recommendations, several initiatives have been implemented to set clearer expectations and improve communication about administrative requirements, including creation of the National Education Leader role, whose work has included:

- providing guidance on the requirements for documentation and quality improvement planning and dispelling myths about administrative burden relating to these requirements, especially as they relate to Outside School Hours Care services;
- Working in collaboration with the jurisdictions and Professional Support Coordinators (PSCs) to support services to meet Quality Area 1. This was achieved through the development and presentation of a National Workshop series, which explores the requirements of the learning frameworks, National Quality Standard and related legislative standards and shares examples of good practice. One of the focus areas of the workshops is developing service or individual plans to address identified gaps in knowledge or practices and continuous quality improvement.

ACECQA also has a memorandum of understanding with the Australian Skills Quality Authority and has worked collaboratively with them to improve the quality of vocational education and training. The focus of this continued collaboration will be on ensuring that future educators are fully skilled and properly assessed before entering the sector.

While these initiatives have been in high demand and well received, the Wave III survey results suggest that quality assessment and rating visits and associated administrative requirements continue to be a source of burden for services and providers.

<sup>29</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden Part 2: Recommendations, November 2013, pg.17.

<sup>30</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden Part 2: Recommendations, November 2013, pg.17.

## 4. Appendix A: Respondent profile

The demographic characteristics of respondents that participated in Wave III of the study are presented in the charts below. The data in these charts is unweighted.

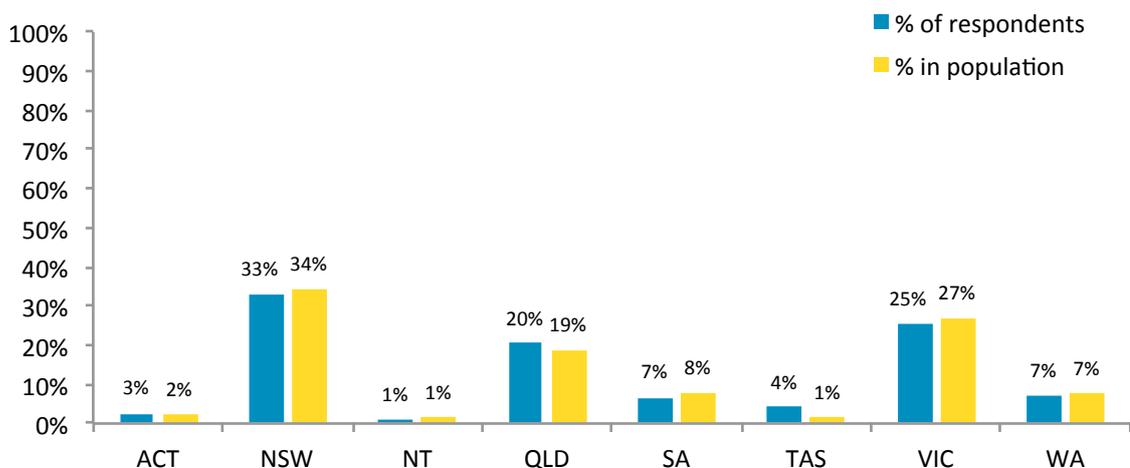
Managing jurisdiction, service type and service size were characteristics used to create a representative sample in Wave I. These characteristics were compared in Wave III to demonstrate the continued representativeness of the sample. More information about representativeness of the Wave III sample can be found at 'Appendix B: Detailed methodology'.

Other demographic characteristics discussed below are:

- Sub-service type
- Number of years in operation
- Management type.

The number of respondents in the Wave III sample was largely similar to the number in the population for both managing jurisdiction and service type. For example, a third of respondents in the sample and in the population were from NSW. Meanwhile, around 95 per cent of respondents in the sample and population were from centre-based services.

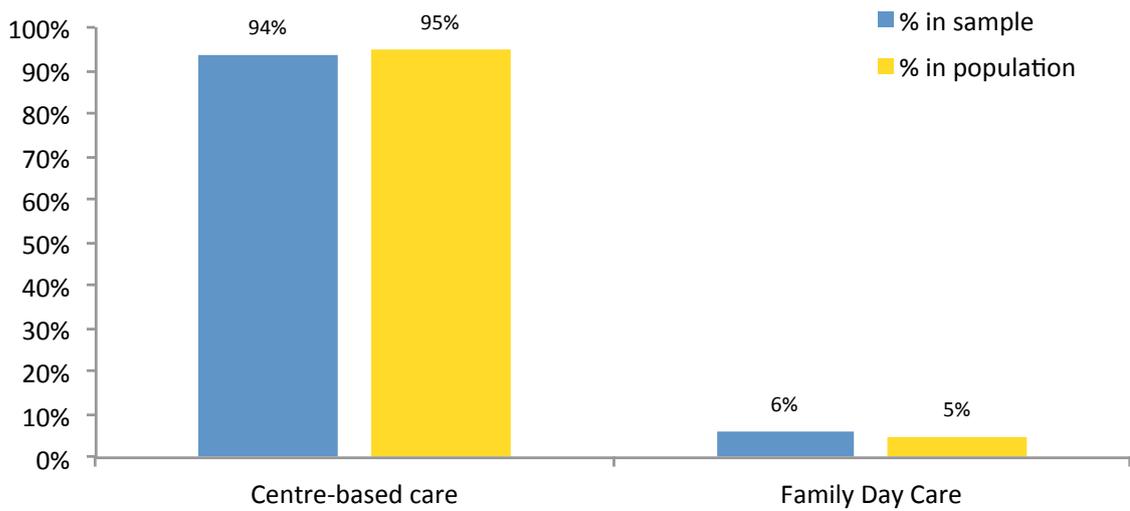
Figure 20: Proportion of respondents in the sample compared to the overall population of providers and services by managing jurisdiction



<sup>31</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden Part 2: Recommendations, November 2013, pg.17.

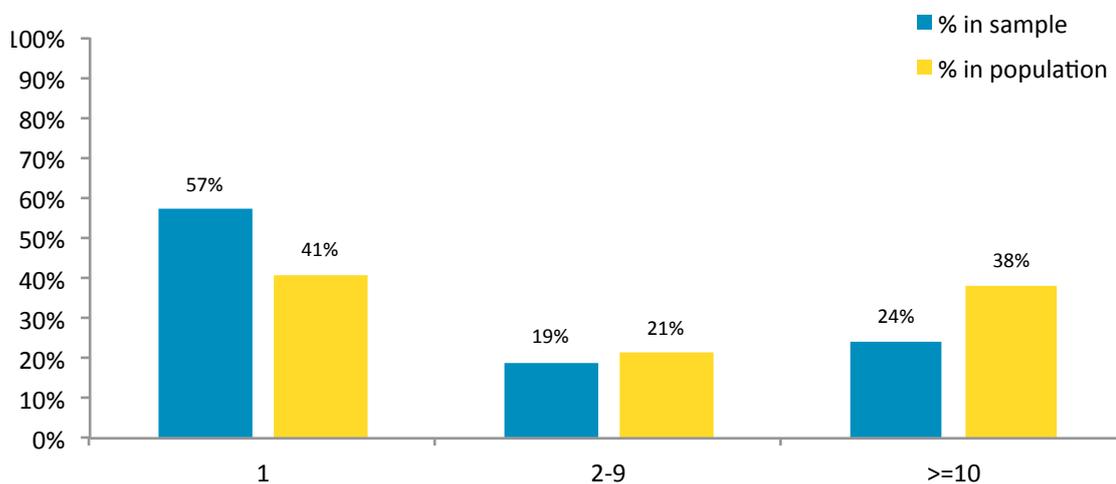
<sup>32</sup> Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, Report on the National Quality Framework & Regulatory Burden Part 2: Recommendations, November 2013, pg.7.

Figure 21: Proportion of respondents in the sample compared to the overall population of providers and services by service type



The difference between the Wave III sample and population was more apparent for service size. Single service providers were over represented in the sample, while large service providers were under-represented. This was balanced out through weighting the responses so that they represented the distribution in the population. More information about weighting can be at 'Appendix B: Detailed methodology'.

Figure 22: Proportion of respondents in the sample compared to the overall population of providers and services by number of attached services



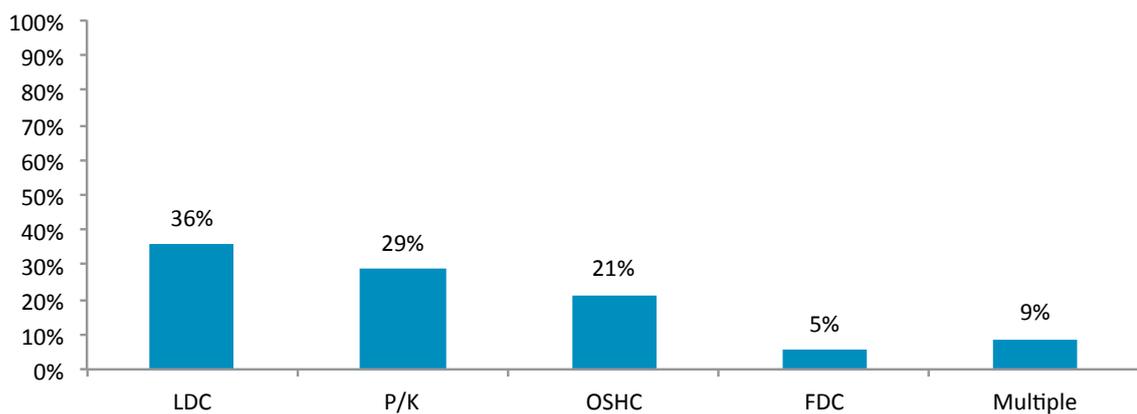
Over a third of respondents in the Wave III sample provided a Long Day Care (LDC) service. This was closely followed by those providing preschool/kindergarten services. One in five respondents reported their service provided out of school hours care (OSHC), while the smallest proportion of the sample provided Family Day Care.

It is important to note that the original design of the sample did not stratify by this characteristic. Managing jurisdiction, service type and service size were characteristics used to create a representative sample in Wave I. These characteristics were compared in Wave III to demonstrate the continued representativeness of the sample.

Other demographic characteristics discussed below are:

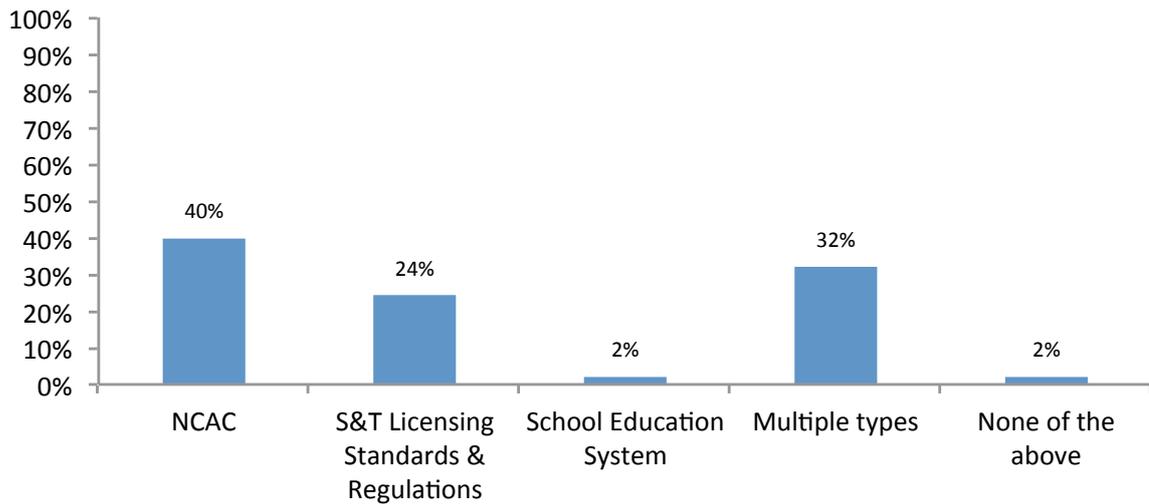
- Sub-service type
- Number of years in operation
- Management type

Figure 23: Proportion of respondents by type of care provided by the organisation



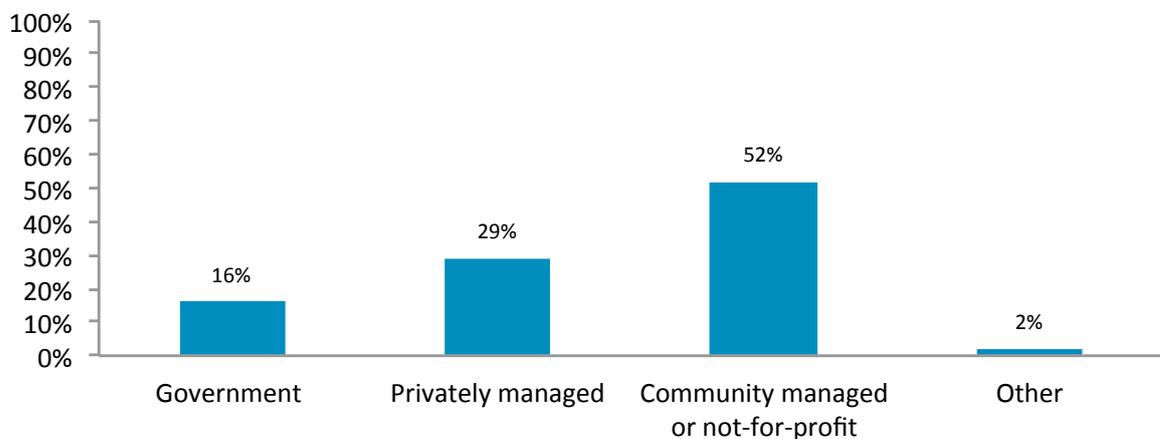
Almost three quarters of respondents previously worked under the NCAC or a combination of the regulatory systems.

Figure 24: Proportion of respondents by regulatory system they previously operated under



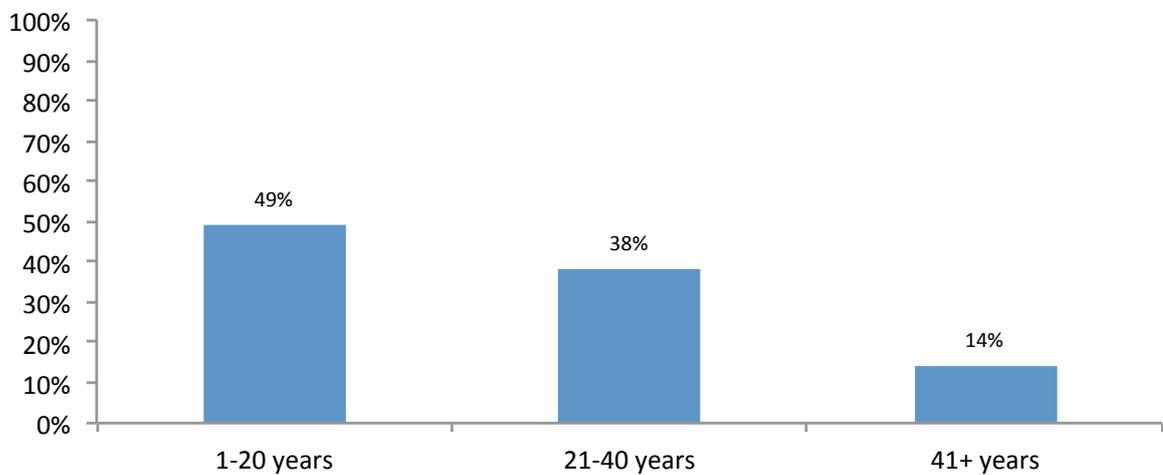
Just over half of the Wave III sample were community managed. The remaining respondents were described their organisation as being privately or government managed. As noted above, the original design of the sample did not stratify by this characteristic.

Figure 25: Proportion of respondents by management type of the organisation



Just under half of the Wave III sample have been in operation between one and 20 years. Four in 10 have been operating between 21 and 40 years. Only a small proportion of respondents reported working more than 40 years.

Figure 26: Proportion of respondents by the number of years the organisation has been in operation



## 5. Appendix B: Wave III detailed methodology

### Overview

The methodology for any study is guided by the purpose of the research. The purpose of the current research project is to identify if administrative and paperwork burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Quality Framework (NQF).

Comparisons between the level of administrative burden experienced under previous regulatory systems and the NQF was not possible as this type of data was not previously collected. Therefore, the study focusses on monitoring change in the perceptions of burden among education and care providers and services under the NQF.

A longitudinal study was considered the most appropriate methodological approach. Longitudinal studies survey the same individuals or groups at regular intervals to make accurate and reliable conclusions about change over time.

Data for the regulatory burden study has so far been collected at three intervals over three years. Each period of data collection is referred to as a 'wave'. Shifts in the perception of administrative burden over time were based on the responses of approved providers and nominated supervisors that participated in all three waves of the study. This type of longitudinal design is referred to as a panel study<sup>33</sup> and requires a minimum of three waves of data.

The methodology explained below is for Wave III of the study.

### Sample design

The Wave III sample was made up of respondents that had participated in Wave I and II. It also included respondents that had participated in Wave II only. These new respondents<sup>34</sup> were invited to participate in Wave II in preparation for a potential Wave IV, if required.

A major disadvantage of panel designs is that the size of respondents reduces with each wave of the study. This introduces a number of biases into the reporting and reduces the reliability of the results. Inviting new respondents to participate in Wave II maintained the panel for reporting in Wave IV.

A total of 5,047 respondents participated in Wave II, however as shown in **Table 7**, slightly fewer were invited to participate in Wave III (4,884). Of the 163 respondents not invited to participate in Wave III:

<sup>33</sup> The main feature of panel studies is that they collect repeated measures from the sample at different points in time.

<sup>34</sup> Respondents refer to the combined sample of approved providers from the providers sample and nominated supervisors from the services sample.

- 81 were approved providers without services
- 66 were services that had been surrendered
- 16 were respondents that had unsubscribed from any further participation.

A third of these respondents were part of the panel for Wave III (32 per cent).

Thirty per cent of the final Wave III sample consisted of respondents that had participated in Waves I and II, while the remaining 70 per cent participated in Wave II only.

Table 7: Wave III sample breakdown

	Approved Providers	Nominated Supervisors	Total Wave III sample
<b>Wave III total sample</b>	2,509	2,375	4,884
<b>Wave II only</b>	1,538	1,868	3,406
<b>(%) Wave II only</b>	61	79	70
<b>Wave I and Wave II</b>	971	507	1,478
<b>(%) Wave I and Wave II</b>	39	21	30

## ■ ■ ■ Survey administration

### Questionnaire design

There were no changes made to the questionnaire in Wave III. The only changes to the questionnaire occurred in Wave II. A few questions were removed from the survey and replaced with new questions.

The questions removed from the Wave II survey were the:

- number of years the organisation/service has been providing education and care
- postcode of the physical location of the organisation/service
- regulatory system the organisation/service operated under in 2012
- level of burden with one-off activities in 2012.

Meanwhile, the questions that were added in Wave II were the:

- specific tasks that made assessment and rating a burden
- specific tasks that made Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) a burden
- perception of burden with waivers.

## Fieldwork set up

Preparing the Wave III sample for fieldwork involved the same process as Wave II.

The first step involved cross-checking the e-mail address of providers and services in the sample file with the NQA ITS to confirm they match. The cross check did not identify any differences between the two sources.

Large providers with three or more services in the Wave III sample were then identified. These providers were asked if they preferred to distribute all Wave III communications to their services or if they were comfortable with ACECQA sending this on their behalf. Communications material included:

- a notification email of the upcoming Wave III questionnaire
- an invitation to participate in Wave III
- reminder emails – three over the fieldwork period.

Almost a quarter of large providers preferred to distribute the invitation themselves (24 per cent). The remaining providers were satisfied with ACECQA managing the invitation process. However, a third wanted to be notified when the Wave III invitations were sent so they could encourage their services to participate. These providers were sent a list of their services that would be invited to participate in Wave III (**Table 8**). These providers were sent a list of their services that would be invited to participate in Wave III.

Table 8: Preferred method for contacting services of large providers

	Large provider to send	ACECQA to send	ACECQA to send and inform large provider	Total
(n)	12	22	17	<b>51</b>
(%)	24	43	33	<b>100</b>

All respondents were notified via email of the upcoming Wave III survey one month prior to the fieldwork. This provided respondents time to plan their participation in the study around other competing demands. The process identified several invalid email addresses for both providers and services. Respondents were contacted by phone to request a new email address.

ACECQA entrusted the set-up and managing of fieldwork to the same external data collection agency as Wave I and II. The data collection agency was provided with the questionnaire, the email addresses of the Wave III sample and instructions regarding large providers and their services.

The online survey was piloted by ACECQA staff and followed by a 'soft launch' to a small sample of approved providers and nominated supervisors. The purpose of this approach was to check that the survey is functioning as expected and to rectify any issues prior to the full launch with the remaining sample.

## Distribution

The fieldwork for Wave III was conducted over five weeks from 4 May 2015 to 5 June 2015.

Respondents were interviewed using computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI). This method was also used in both Waves I and II. A unique link to the survey was embedded in the invitation email and sent to providers and services by the external data collection agency.

The agency also distributed a separate invitation to large providers for each service they were to contact directly. The name of the service was included in each invitation email making it easy for large providers to distribute.

Reminder emails were sent fortnightly. The first reminder was sent on 13 May 2015 and the second on 27 May 2015. Again, large providers, contacting their services directly, were sent reminder emails to forward on.

## Data Production

### Data preparation

The raw Wave III data received from the external data collection agency was checked for any inconsistencies in responses. Any identified issues were cleaned in line with the instructions in the questionnaire.

For example, one question in the survey asks respondents to select the ongoing requirement they consider most burdensome. However, respondents were only asked this question if they had earlier assigned more than one requirement an equally high level of burden<sup>35</sup>. Responses that did not meet these instructions were deleted.

The response of participants from all three waves of the study was merged into a single data file in Excel. The service and provider ID number was used to match respondents across the three waves of the study. A 'wide format' as opposed to a 'long format'<sup>36</sup> was adopted in the Wave III spreadsheet. A wide format is where the responses from each respondent for all waves of the study, is presented on one row.

For example:

Respondent	Q1 Wave 1	Q2 Wave 2	Q3 Wave 3
1	2	3	1
2	1	2	3
3	4	5	2

Of the 2,483 responses received in Wave III, 859 matched to Wave I and II (**Table 9**). The raw data was then imported into STATA<sup>37</sup> and transformed into an appropriate format for analysis. Frequency tables were run for each question to confirm that the coding and labels had been applied correctly.

<sup>35</sup> Each requirement rated at 4 or 5 on the burdensome scale

<sup>36</sup> A long format is where the response for each wave is on a separate row per respondent

<sup>37</sup> STATA is the statistical analysis software used to conduct the analysis in Wave III

Table 9: Participation in Wave III

	Approved Providers	Nominated Supervisors	Total Wave III sample
<b>Wave III responses:</b>	1,335	1,148	2,483
<b>Wave II and III</b>	759	865	1,624
<b>(%) Wave II and III only</b>	57	75	65
<b>Wave I, Wave II and Wave III (panel)</b>	576	283	859
<b>(%) Wave I, Wave II and Wave III (panel)</b>	43	25	35

Open ended responses where 'other' was selected was reviewed in Excel and back-coded, where reasonable, to the existing response codes. New response codes were created if the proportion of a particular 'other' response was as high, or higher, than the lowest scoring predetermined response code in the question.

## Weighting

Weighting is the process used to ensure the sample of respondents from a study is representative of the population from which they were recruited.

The Wave III data was weighted using the same respondent characteristics used to stratify the sample in Wave I – managing jurisdiction, service type and provider size. **Table 10**, **Table 11** and **Table 12** compare the population and sample statistics for these factors.

For the most part, the Wave III sample breakdown is consistent with the population breakdown. However, there are some differences such as:

- Qld. and Tas. are over-represented in Wave III
- Family day care is under-represented in Wave III
- Large providers are under-represented in Wave III
- Small providers are over-represented in Wave III.



Table 10: Comparing the Wave III response rate to population in jurisdictions

	Population (n)	Population (%)	Wave III (n)	Wave III (%)	Margin of error (±)
ACT	335	2.3	23	2.7	26.00
NSW	5,061	34.1	284	33.1	8.00
NT	216	1.5	7	0.8	49.00
Qld.	2,766	18.7	175	20.4	10.00
SA	1,153	7.8	57	6.6	17.00
Tas.	222	1.5	35	4.1	21.00
Vic.	3,967	26.8	218	25.4	9.00
WA	1,107	7.5	60	7.0	17.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,827</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5.00</b>

Table 11: Comparing the Wave III response to population by service type

	Population (n)	Population (%)	Wave III (n)	Wave III (%)	Margin of error
Centre-based	13,908	93.8	815	94.9	5.00
Family Day Care	919	6.2	44	5.1	19.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,827</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5.00</b>

Table 12: Comparing the Wave III response to population by provider size

	Population (n)	Population (%)	Wave III (n)	Wave III (%)	Margin of error (±)
Single service	6,049	40.8	487	56.7	6.00
Medium (2-9 services)	3,132	21.1	162	18.9	10.00
Large (10+ services)	5,646	38.1	210	24.4	9.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,827</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>859</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>5.00</b>

All respondents in the study were assigned a weight based on whether they were over or under-represented in the sample. Those that were under-represented were assigned a weight greater than one while those over-represented received a weight less than one. For example, responses from Qld. and Tas. were assigned a lower weight since they were over-represented in Wave III.

## Margin of error

The margin of error is the range of difference between the sample result and true result in the population. The margin of error for the total Wave III panel is  $\pm 5.00$  (Table 4,5,6). If the analysis shows that 90 per cent of respondents in the Wave III panel support the NQF, the true result in the population lies between 85 and 95 per cent (a difference of 5.00 per cent on either side). A small margin of error improves confidence that the perceptions of respondents from Wave III represent the perceptions of the population as a whole.

Equally important is the confidence level at which the margin of error is based. The margin of error in the Wave III study was calculated at the 99 per cent confidence level. This means that if the Wave III survey was conducted 100 times, the results would be between the parameters of the margin of error 99 times.

However, the margin of error is influenced by the size of both the population and sample. The smaller the population size, the greater the sample size that is required to be able to reliably report results. For example, respondents from NSW represent a smaller proportion of education and care service in their state than those from Tasmania (six vs. 16 per cent). However, population differences between the states and territories has meant a much higher margin of error in Tasmania than NSW (21.00 vs. 8.00). Results with a high margin of error were not analysed in the Wave III.

## Sample attrition

A problematic feature of longitudinal studies that report on panel data is the gradual loss of respondents at each point in time the survey is conducted. This is referred to as sample attrition and is influenced by factors such as the respondent's willingness to participate in the survey or changes to their location or contact details.

High attrition restricts the type of statistical analysis that can be conducted in panel studies due to the reduced sample size.

**Table 13** below, compares the estimated and observed level of attrition for Wave II and III. Fieldwork strategies introduced in Wave III, such as working closely with large providers and communicating effectively with other services, contributed to reducing the level of attrition in line with the Wave III estimate. By Wave III, the difference between the estimated and actual attrition was only two per cent (40 vs 42 per cent).

Table 13: Estimated and actual attrition across Wave II and III

	Estimated (%)	Actual (%)	Difference (%)
Wave II	33	69	+36
Wave III	40	42	+2

Stricter parameters for reporting statistical significance were implemented in Wave III to improve confidence in the results. These are explained further in the 'data analysis and reporting' section below.

## Self-selection bias

Self-selection bias is a common issue in survey research and occurs when respondents are given the opportunity to select themselves to participate in a study. It assumes that a proportion of total respondents selected themselves to participate because they felt strongly about the topic of the study. While the degree to which self-selection bias may be present in Wave I, II and Wave III research is not measurable, it is noted that such a bias could skew the results towards a strong positive or negative perception of the topic.

ACECQA sought to overcome issues with attrition and self-selection bias through the application of robust statistical testing with stricter parameters for reporting statistical significance. This is explained in more detail below.

## ■ ■ ■ Data analysis and reporting

The approach to reporting in Wave III was stated in the Wave II report:

**As part of the full Wave III report in 2015 ACECQA will analyse and present the results for all questions from the regulatory burden survey across the three waves, regardless of whether a significant difference is identified. Results that are identified as statistically significant will be presented together with the size of the effect<sup>38</sup>.**

Tables and charts were produced for all questions across the three waves of the study. These results were visually inspected for an indication of change in perceptions of burden over time. Results that showed a change in perceptions were noted for further statistical testing, while those that showed no change were included in Appendix C as summary data.

### Statistical significance testing

Two significance testing options were implemented in Wave III – fixed effects regression and sign tests for matched pairs.

#### Fixed Effects Regression

This robust statistical method was used to identify how much of the change in perceptions of overall burden over time could be explained by changes in perceptions of burden with the ongoing requirements. Ongoing requirements identified through the descriptive analyses were correlated with overall burden to determine if it was appropriate to continue with the regression (**Table 14**).

<sup>38</sup> ACECQA (2014). Report on National Quality Framework and Regulatory Burden – Wave II: p 7.

Table 14: Guidelines for interpreting correlation results

	Positive	Negative
<b>Weak</b>	0.1 to 0.3	-0.1 to -0.3
<b>Moderate</b>	>0.3 to 0.5	<-0.3 to -0.5
<b>Strong</b>	>0.5	<-0.5

The association between the ongoing requirements and overall burden was moderate to strong (0.44 to 0.66), suggesting that regression was a viable testing option.

Two control variables were also added to the regression model – the level support and data collection waves.

The level of support was highly skewed towards the upper end of the scale. As such, there were concerns that this might make the results seem more positive than they really were. Meanwhile, the data collection waves were included to pinpoint the greatest change between the waves and the factor that influenced this outcome.

### Sign test for matched pairs with effect size

The sign test is a non-parametric test used to determine whether a median difference exists between paired observations<sup>39</sup>. This statistical test is appropriate for analysis in Wave III as it requires that the same respondents be asked the same questions at two different time intervals.

As such this means the test cannot be conducted for results over three waves of the study. Instead, sign tests were used to compare the change in perceptions of burden from Wave II to Wave III and Wave I to Wave III.

A stricter approach to reporting statistical significance was implemented in Wave III compared to other waves of the study. Significant changes were only reported if the results were both:

- Significant at a 99 per cent confidence level (>0.01), and;
- Had at least a small effect (d)

The effect size was also reported alongside significance testing in Wave II. These parameters were double in Wave III, as stated in the Wave II report. Changing perceptions is gradual process that

<sup>39</sup>Laerd Statistics (2015) Sign Test using SPSS Statistics <https://statistics.laerd.com/spss-tutorials/sign-test-using-spss-statistics.php>. Accessed 16 October 2015

occurs over prolonged period of time. Therefore, the effect size parameters will increase with each of Wave the study. The effect size parameters used in Wave III are provided in **Table 15** below:

Table 15: Effect parameters for reporting in Wave II and III

	Wave II	Wave III
<b>Small</b>	d is between $\pm 0.05$ and $\pm 0.12$	d is between $\pm 0.10$ and $\pm 0.24$
<b>Moderate</b>	d is greater than $\pm 0.12$ but less than $\pm 0.20$	d is greater than $\pm 0.24$ but less than $\pm 0.40$
<b>Large</b>	d is greater than $\pm 0.20$	d is greater $\pm 0.40$

This approach to reporting promoted confidence and reliability that changes in perceptions reported in Wave III were true of the population and not due to chance.

## Independent review of the method applied to produce this report

ACECQA contracted the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) to peer review the Wave III project. They were asked to review:

- the appropriateness of the regression techniques used for analysis of the regulatory burden Wave III data
- whether the interpretation of the results and subsequent conclusions drawn from the analysis are supported by the evidence .

ACER reviewed the results from the fixed effects regression model and sign test with effect size. They concluded that the regression model could not reliably explain the shift in perceptions of burden over time, despite the results being statistically significant.

The explanatory power of a regression model is represented by the  $R^2$  value multiplied by 100 to convert it into a percentage. The  $R^2$  value for the regression model in Wave III was less than 0.10 meaning the model could only explain less than 10 percent of the change in perceptions of burden over time.

Instead, ACER supported a visual representation of the results reported together with of any significant results using the sign test with effect size.

## 6. Appendix C: Graphical presentation of all survey questions in Wave III

Figure 27: Proportion of respondents by type of care provided by the organisation

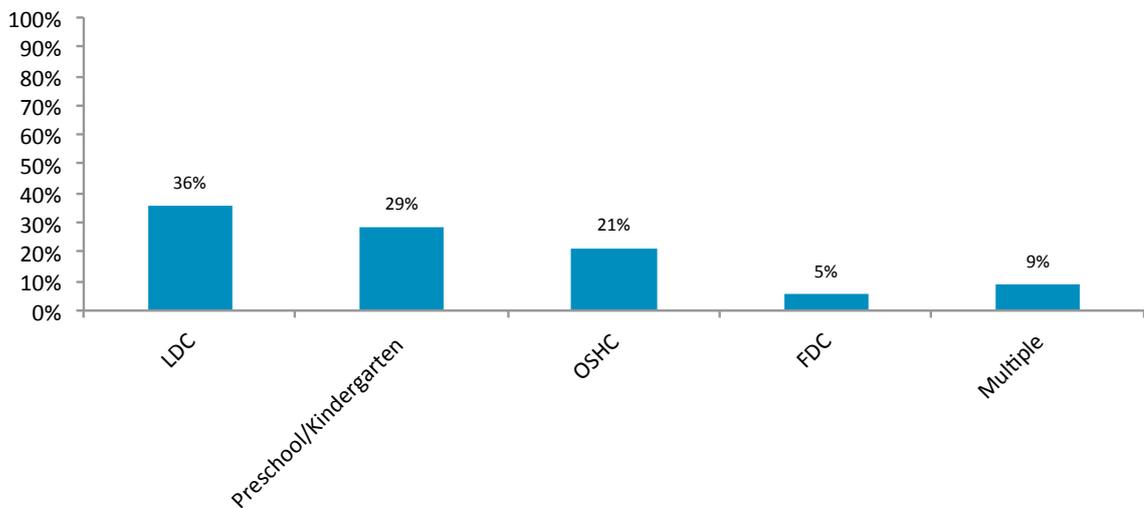


Figure 28: Position of respondents in the organisation

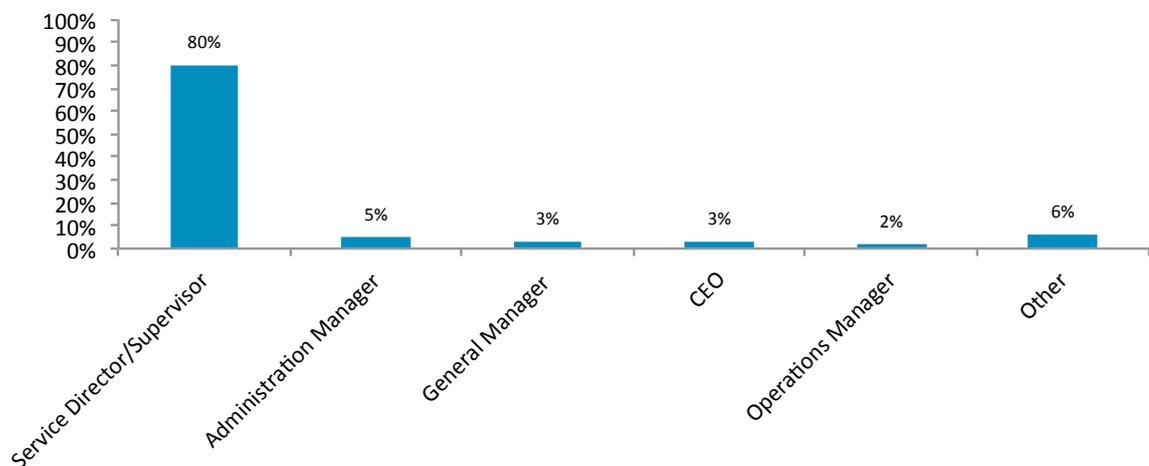


Figure 29: Managing jurisdiction of the respondent

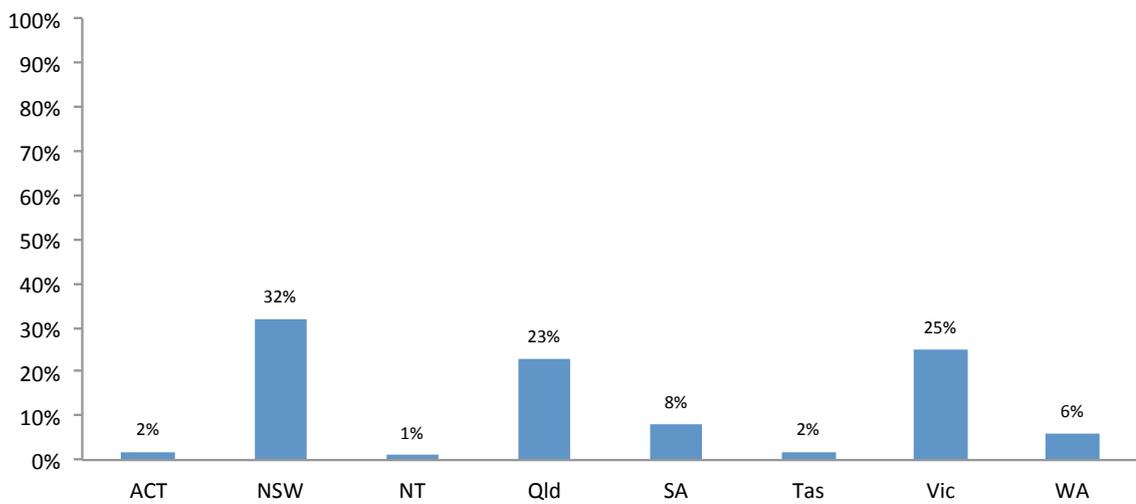


Figure 30: Level of support for the NQF by wave

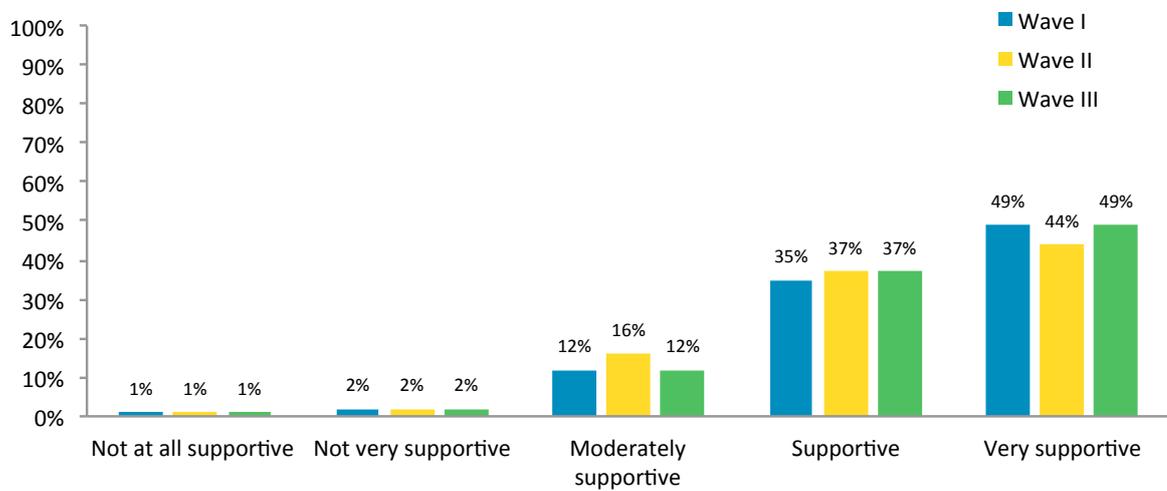


Figure 31: Level of perceived burden associated with learning about the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations by wave

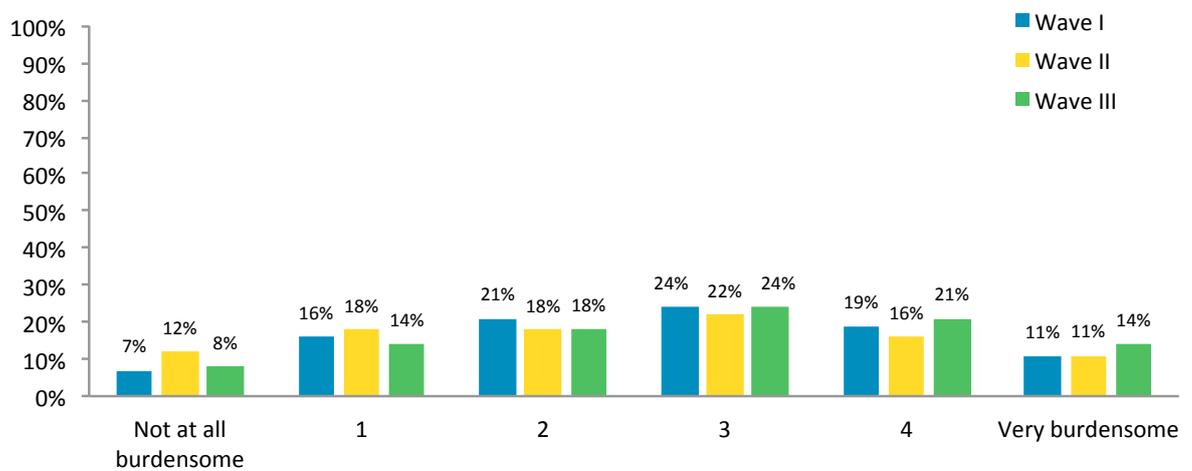


Figure 32: Level of perceived burden associated with developing policies and procedures that comply with the National Law by wave

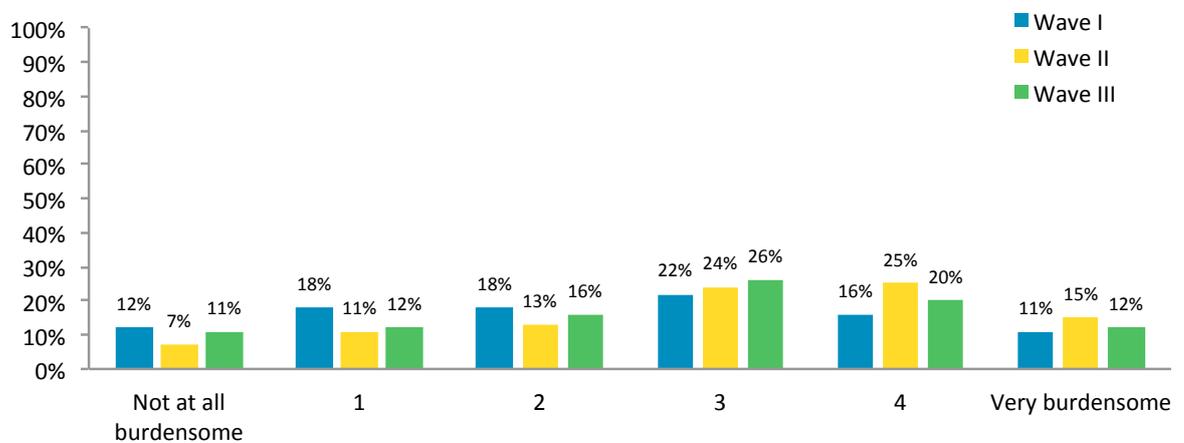


Figure 33 Level of perceived burden associated with ensuring staff know about the changes by wave

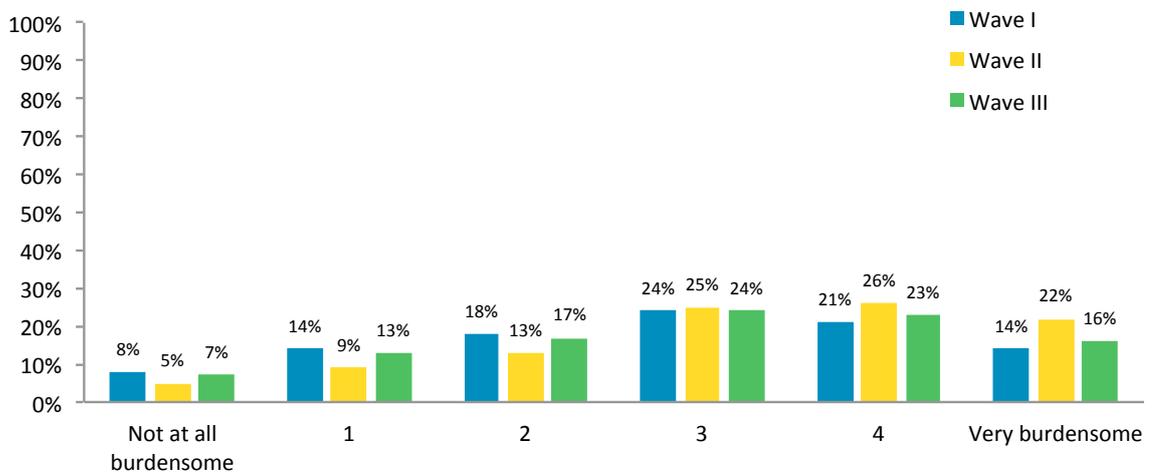


Figure 34: Adjustment activity that was perceived to be most burdensome by wave

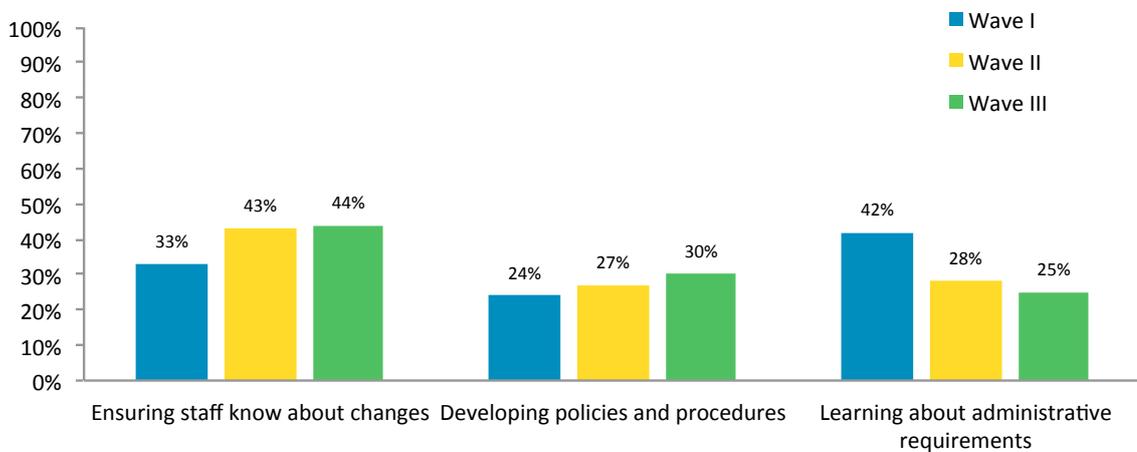


Figure 35: Factors that contribute to learning about administrative requirements being perceived as most burdensome by wave

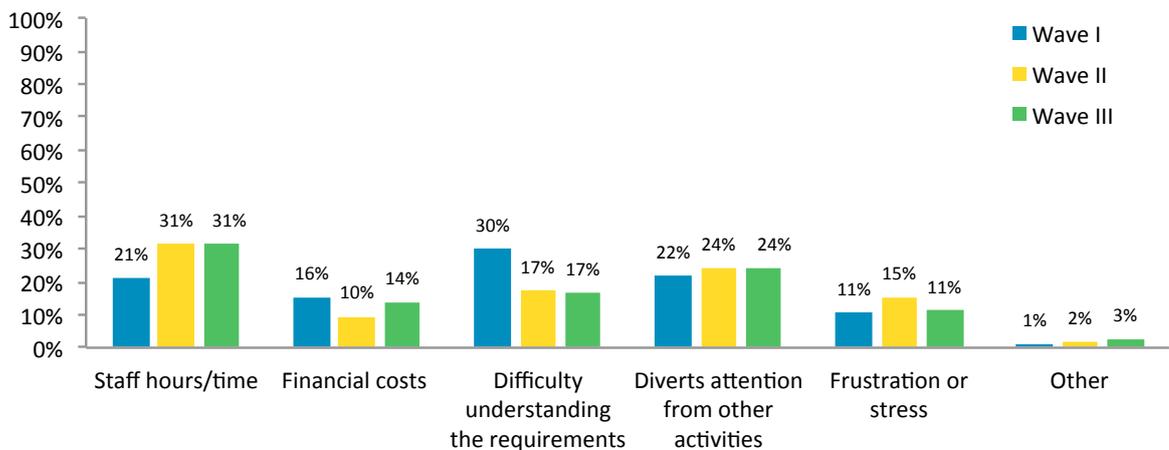


Figure 36: Factors that contribute to developing policies and procedures being perceived as most burdensome by wave

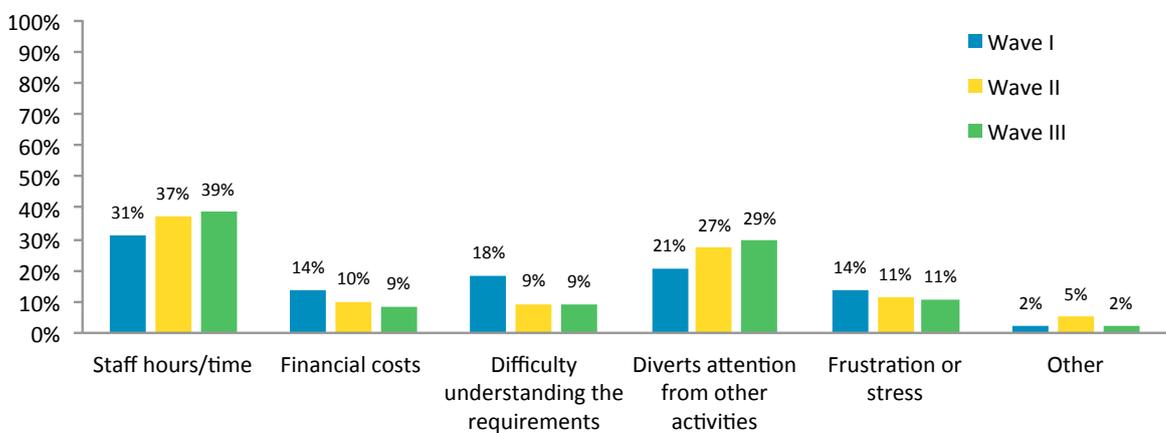


Figure 37: Factors that contribute to 'ensuring staff know about the changes' being perceived as most burdensome by wave

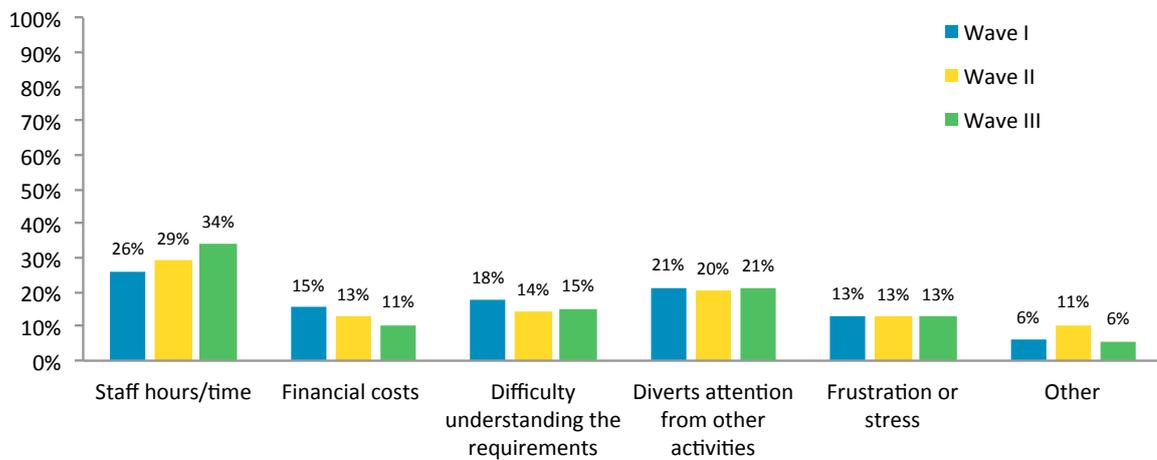


Figure 38: Level of burden associated with displaying information by wave

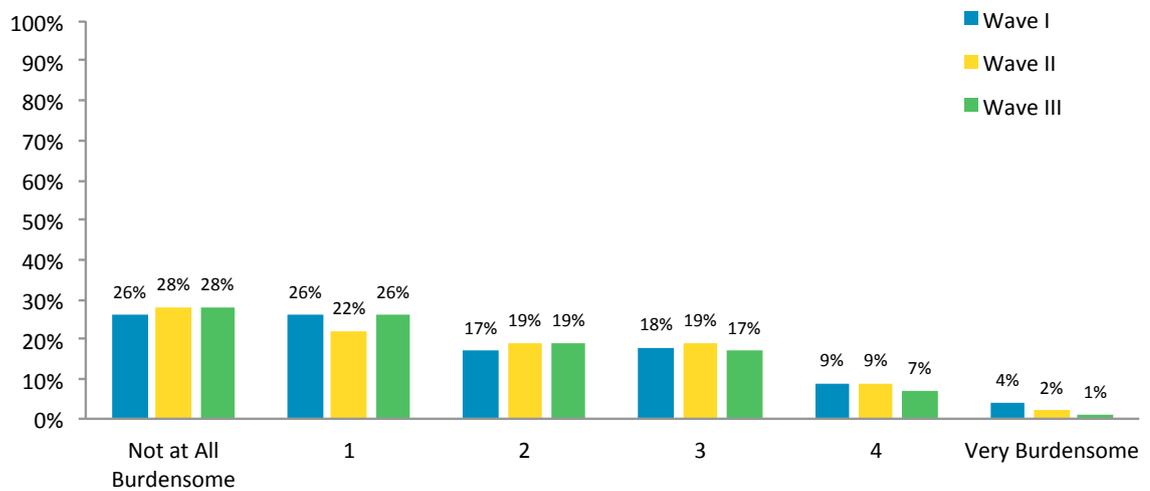


Figure 39: Level of burden associated with keeping records by wave

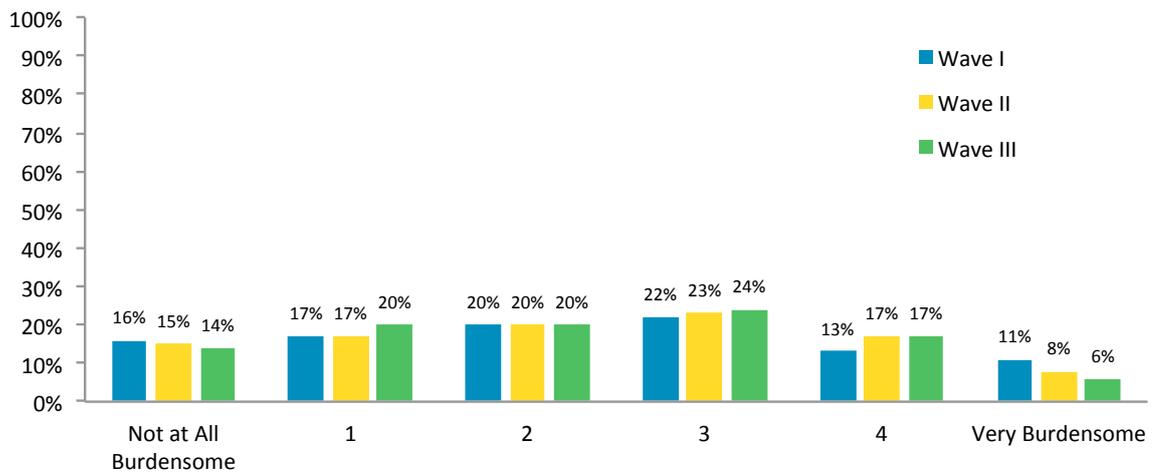


Figure 40: Level of burden associated with provider and services approvals by wave

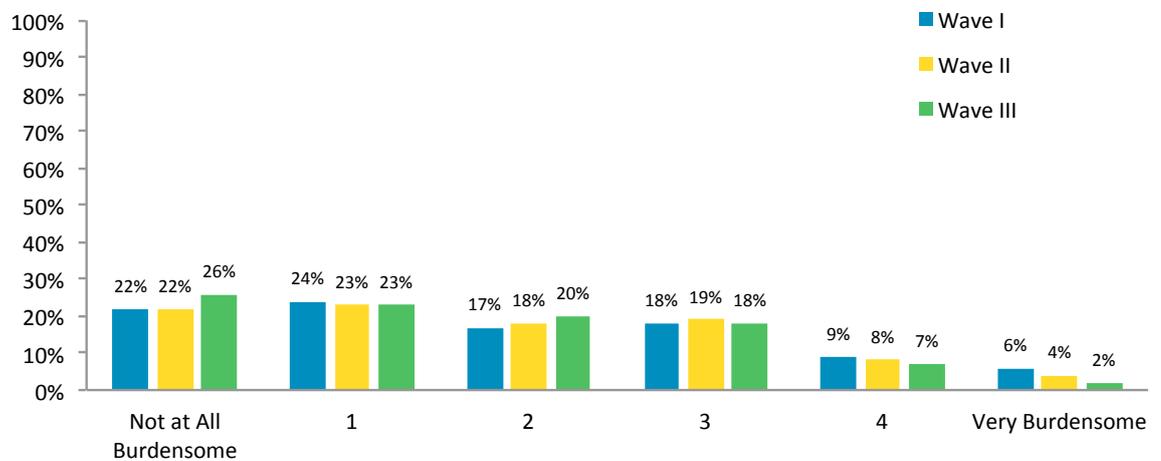


Figure 41: Level of burden associated with qualifications assessments by wave

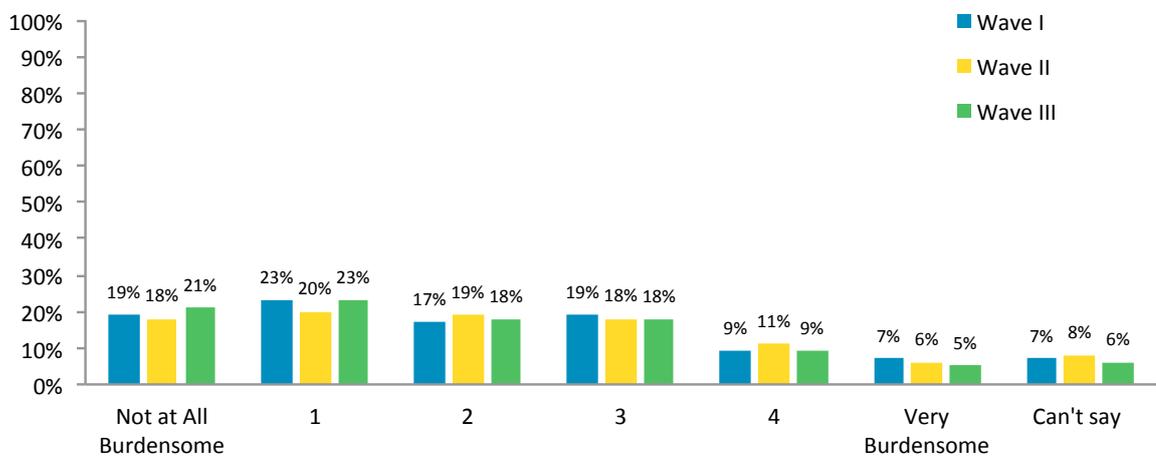


Figure 42: Level of burden associated with qualifications assessments by wave

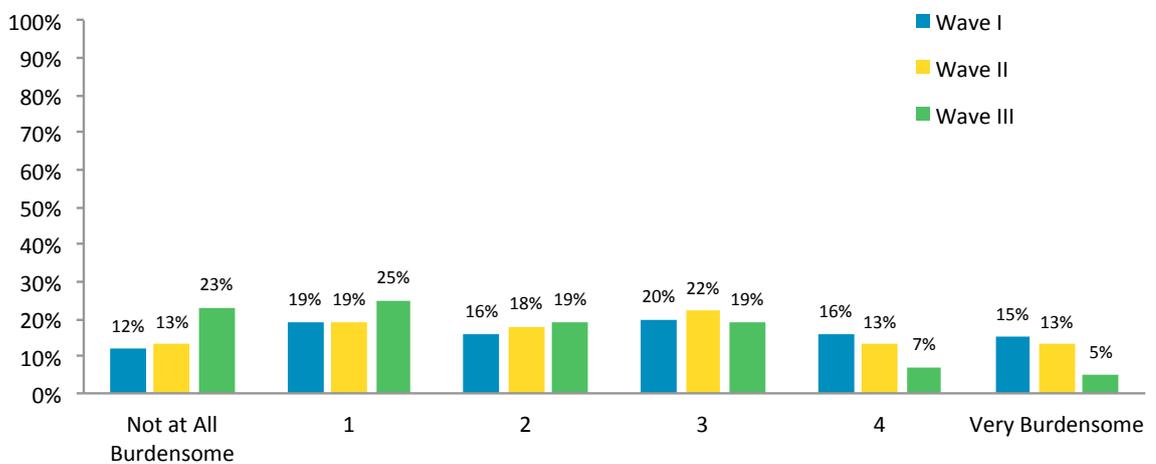


Figure 43: Level of burden associated with quality assessment and rating visits by wave

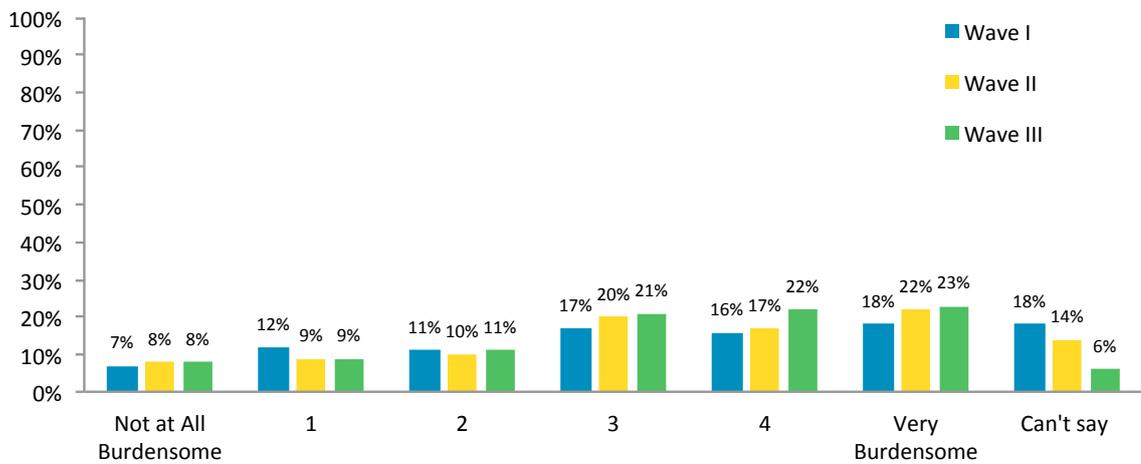


Figure 44: Level of burden associated with notifications by wave

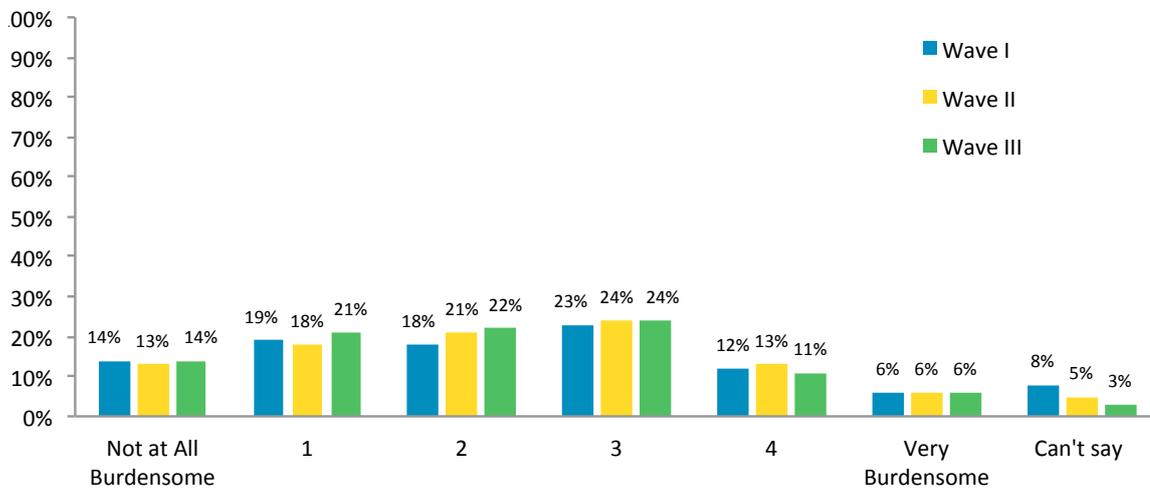


Figure 45: Level of burden associated with Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) by wave

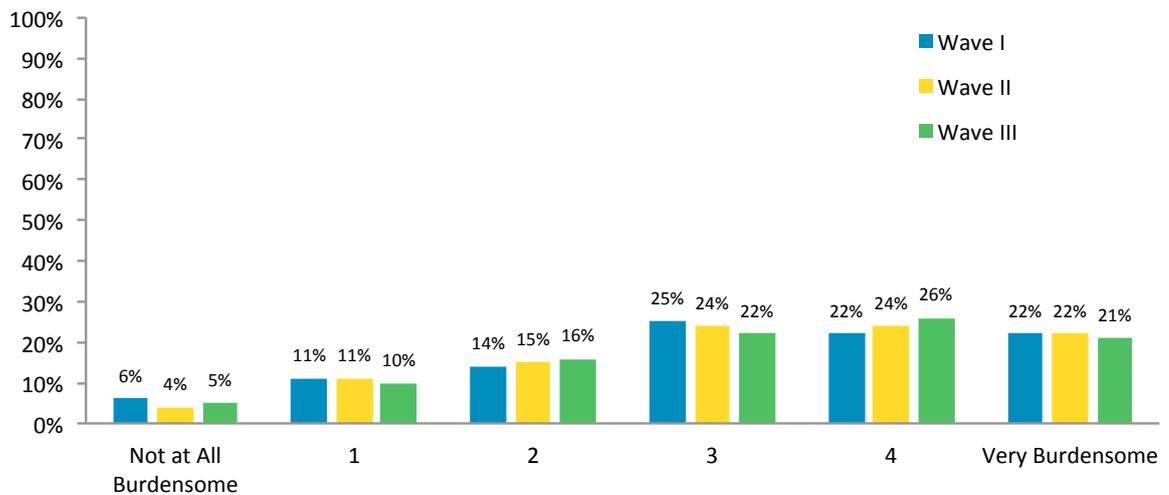


Figure 46: Level of burden associated with documenting children's learning by wave

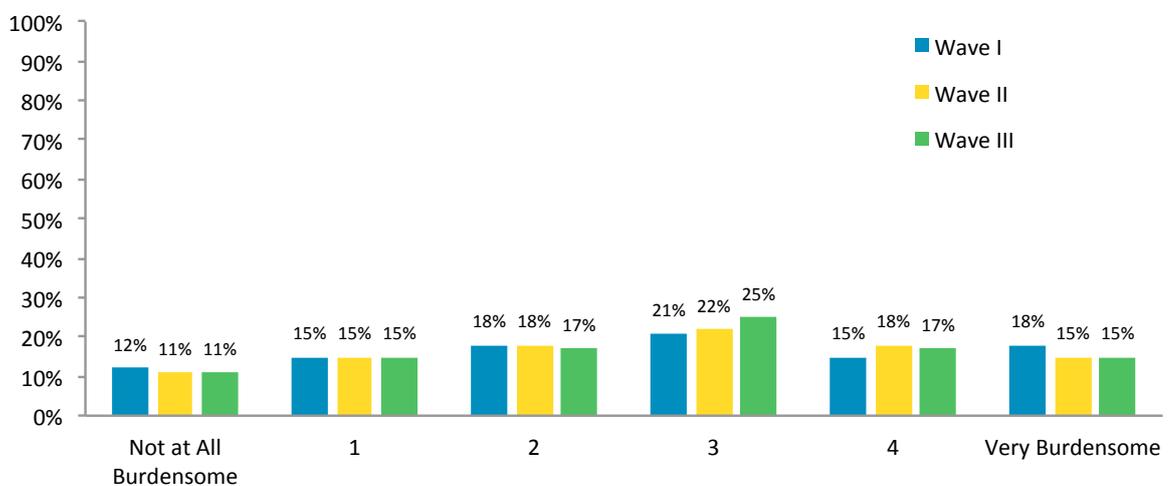


Figure 47: Level of burden associated with maintaining policies and procedures by wave

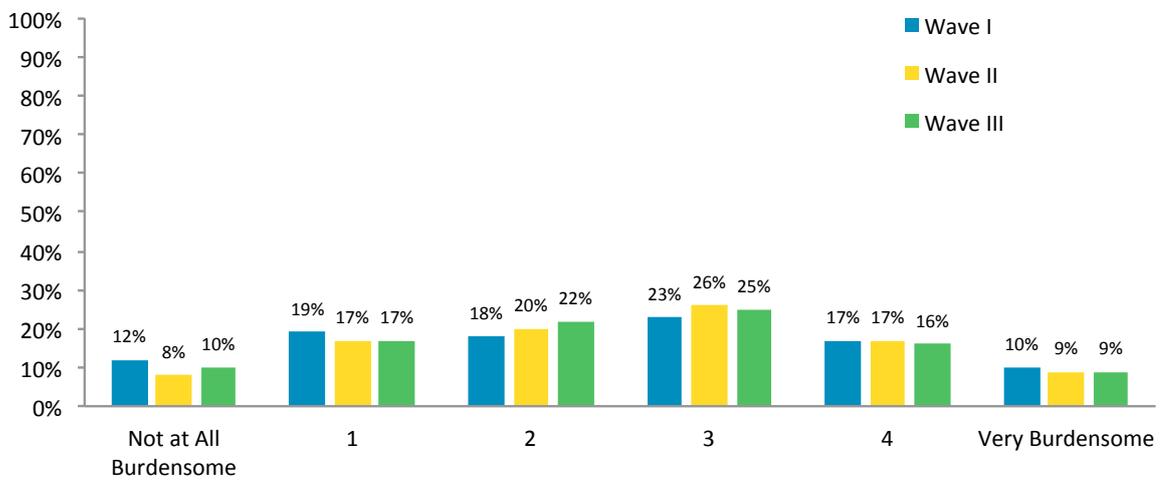


Figure 48: Level of burden associated with ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations by wave

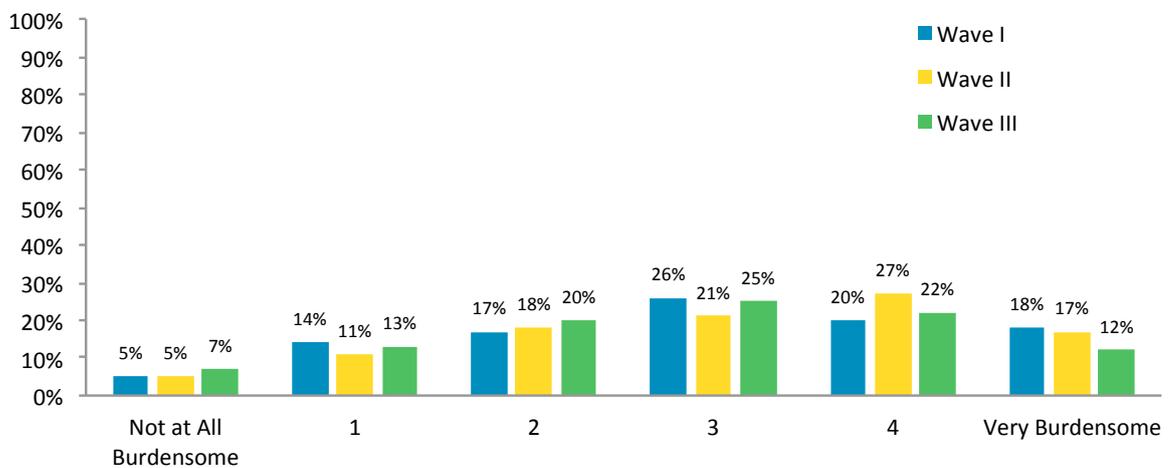


Figure 49: Level of burden associated with waivers by wave

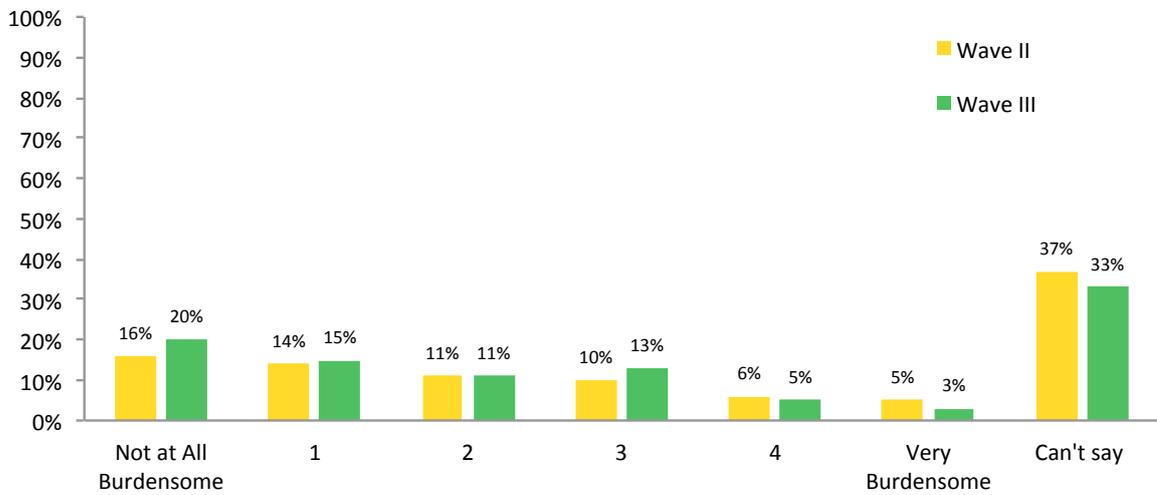


Figure 50: Specific requirements that make record keeping perceived as burdensome by wave

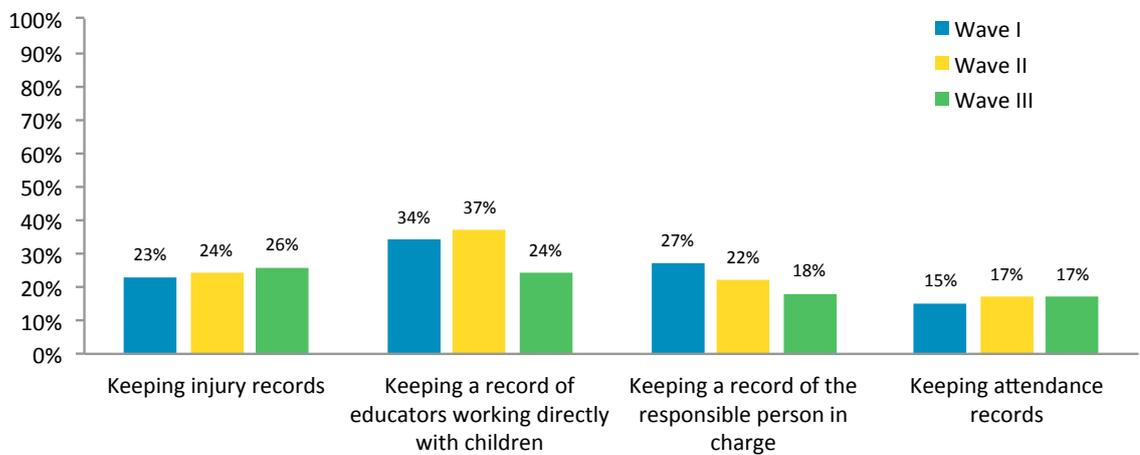


Figure 51: Specific requirements that make notifications perceived as burdensome by wave

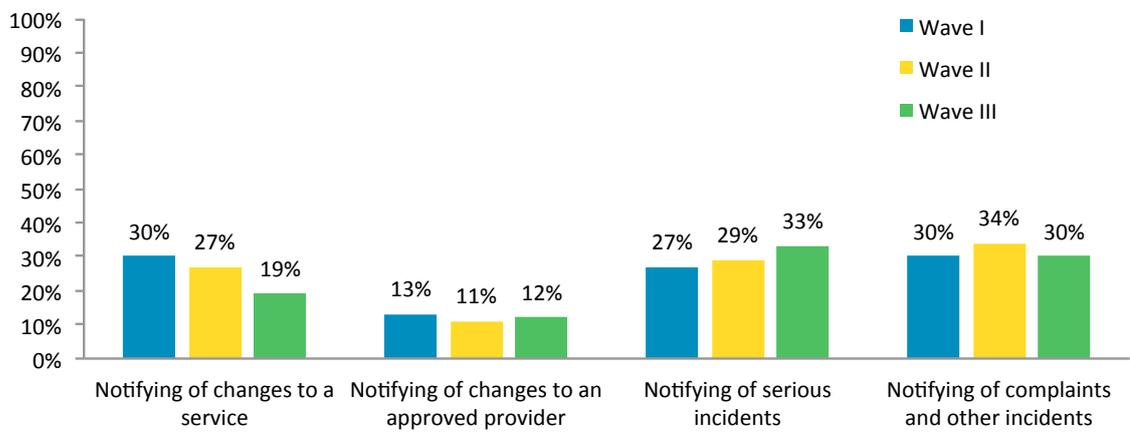


Figure 52: Specific tasks that make assessment and rating visits perceived as burdensome by wave

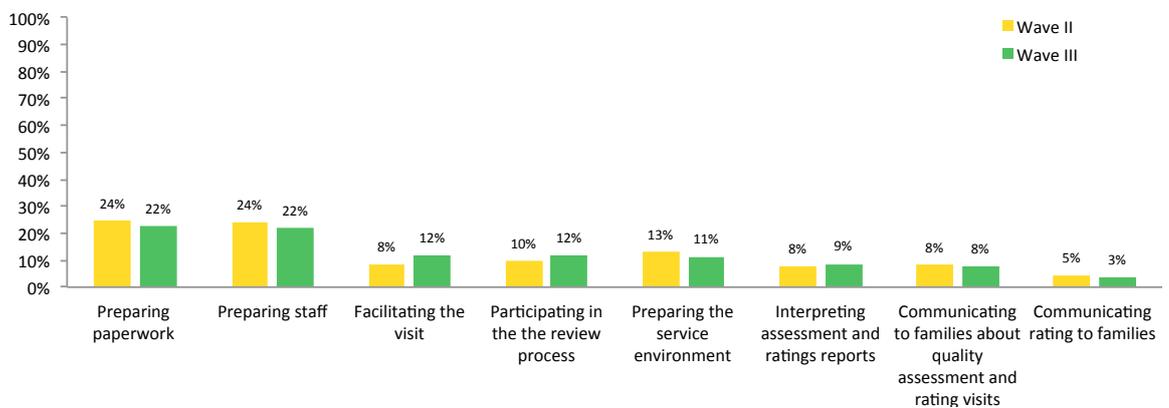


Figure 53: Specific tasks that make QIP's perceived as burdensome by wave

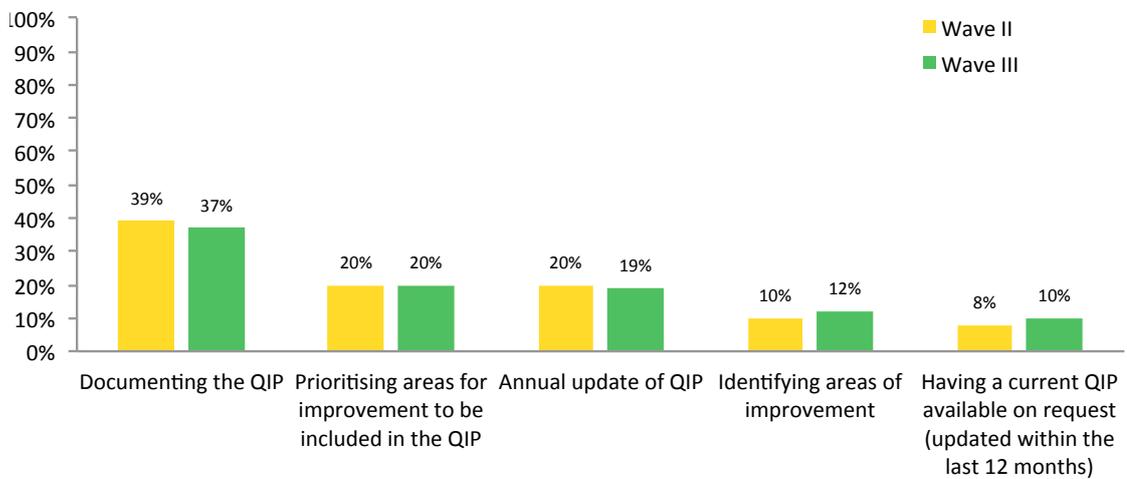


Figure 54: Top six ongoing requirements that are perceived as most burdensome by wave

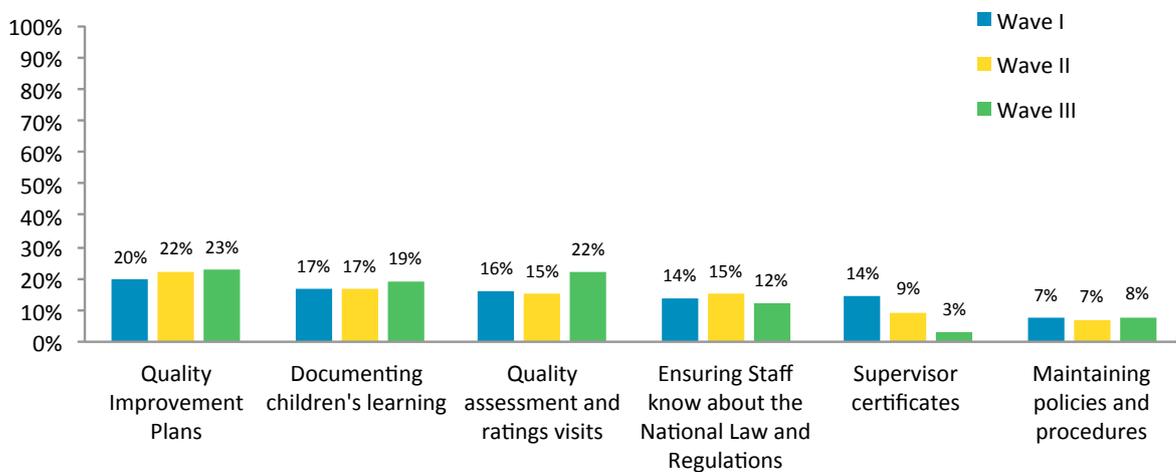


Figure 55: Factors that make administrative requirements perceived as most burdensome by wave

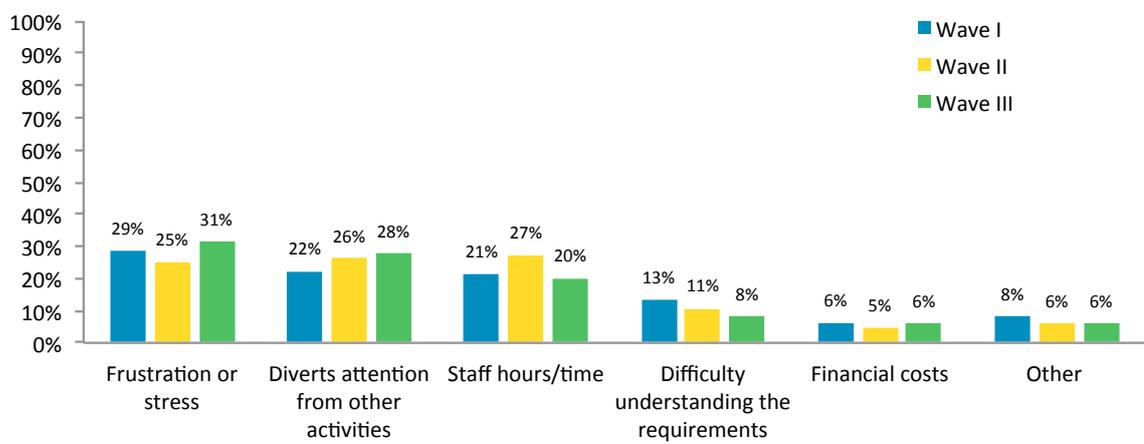


Figure 56: Attitude to statement 'administrative burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations' by wave

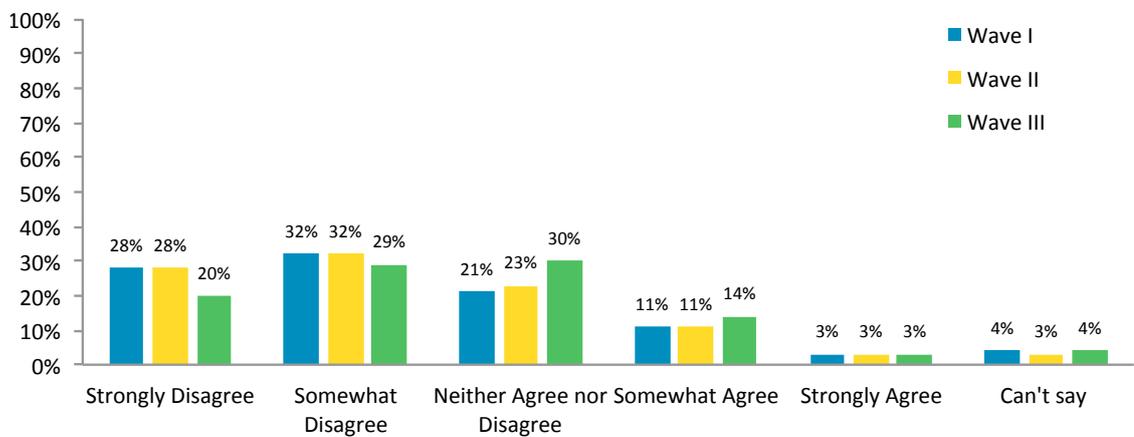


Figure 57: Attitude to statement 'it is easy to find information about the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations' by wave

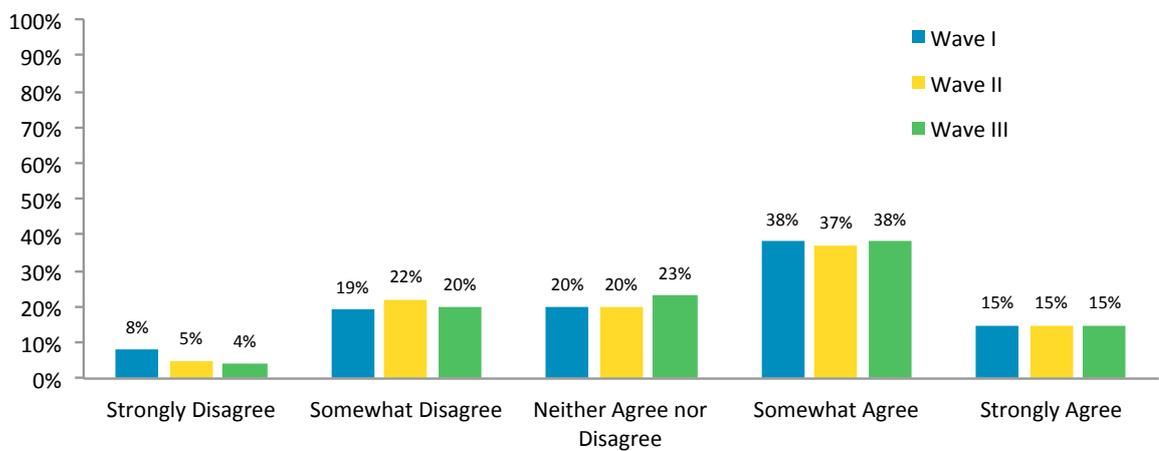


Figure 58: Attitude to statement 'it is difficult to understand the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations' by wave

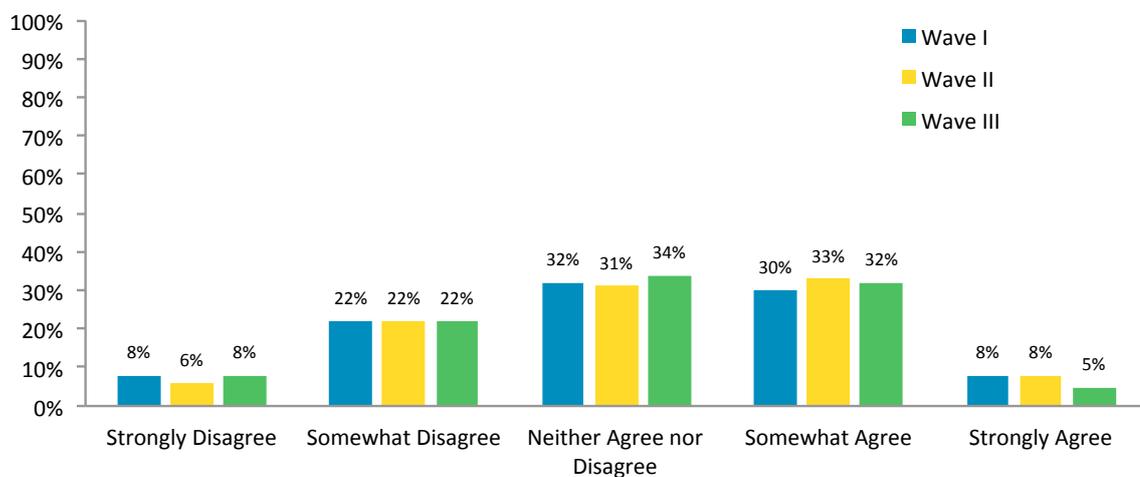


Figure 59: Attitude to statement 'administrative requirements across the states and territories are consistent' by wave (provider only question)

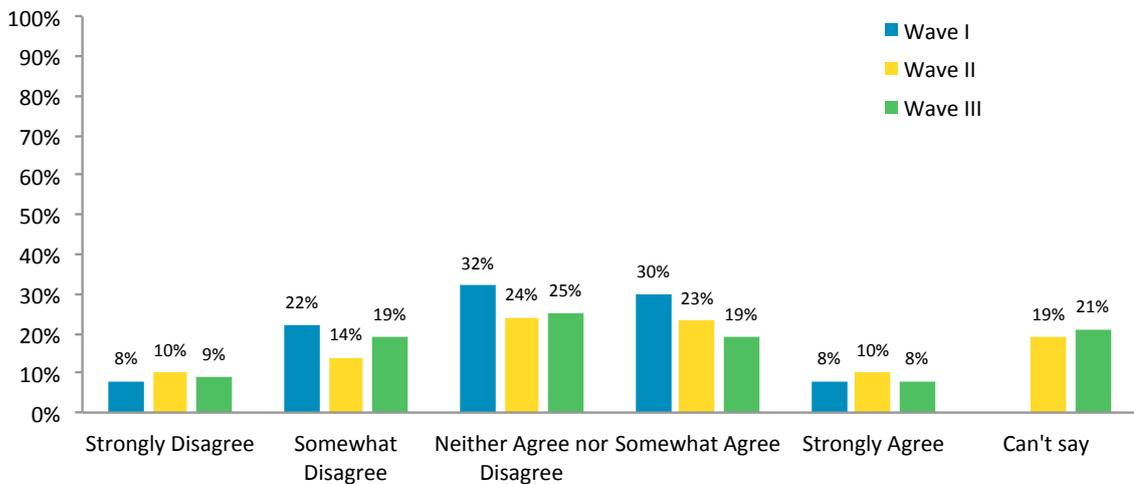


Figure 60: Attitude to statement 'the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations are simpler than the previous licensing and accreditation systems' by wave

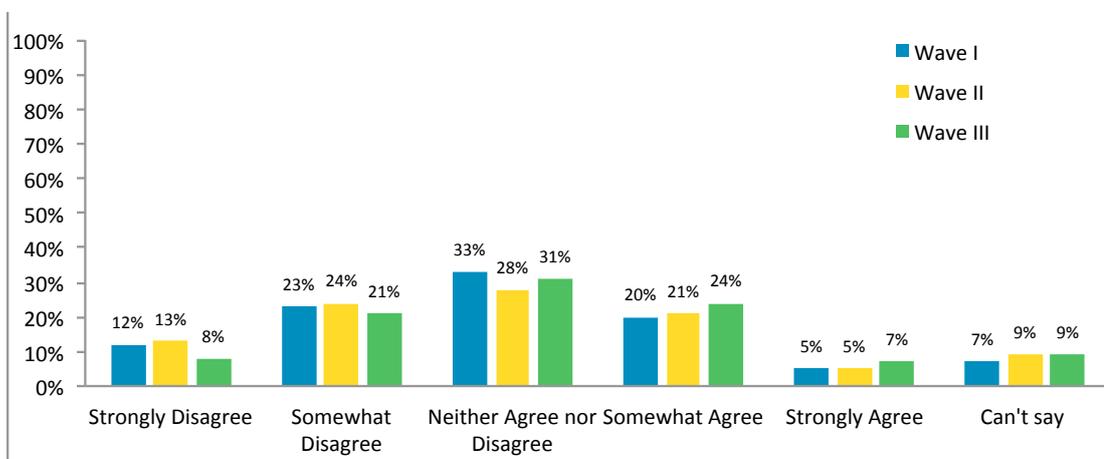


Figure 61: Attitude to statement 'I feel I am doing more work than necessary to make sure that I meet the requirements of the National Law and Regulations' by wave

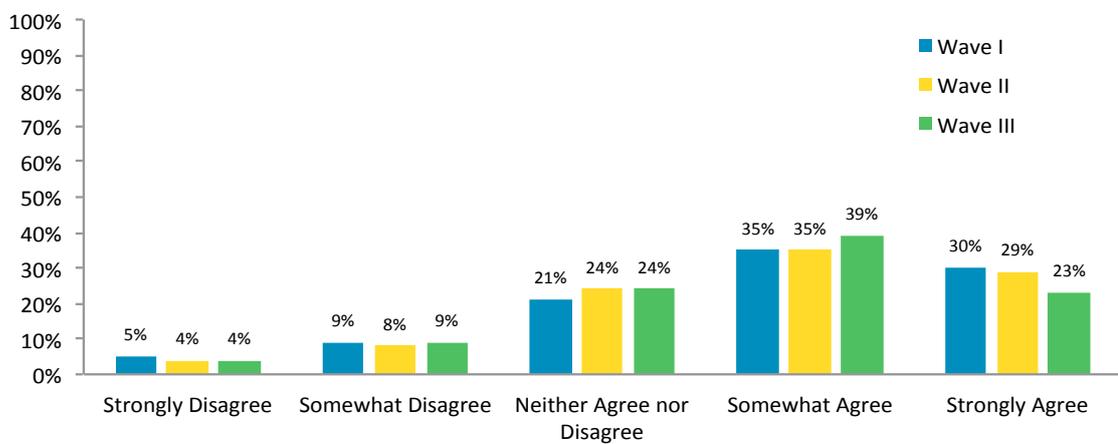


Figure 62: Overall burden associated with the ongoing administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations by wave

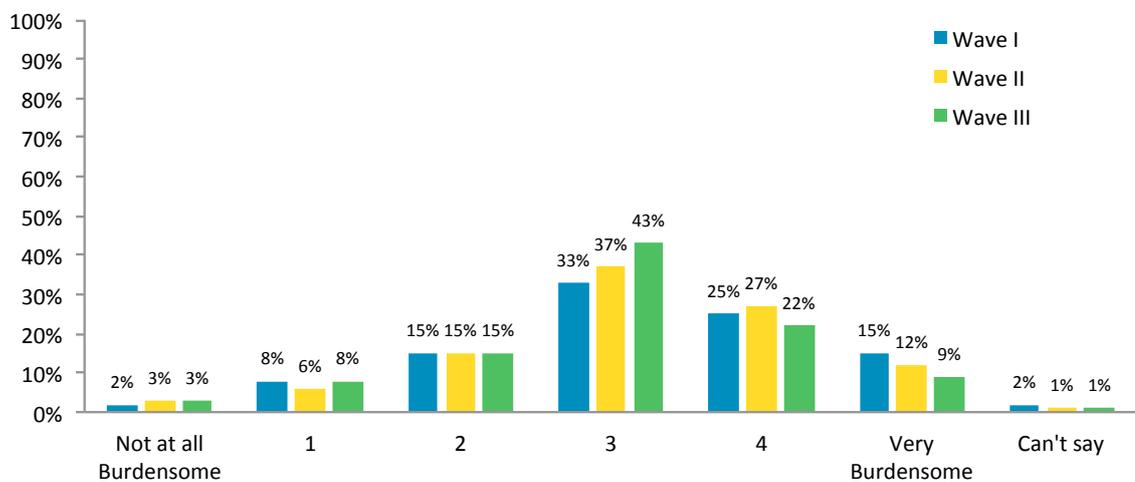


Figure 63: Perceived utility of resources in reducing administrative burden under the NQF in Wave III only

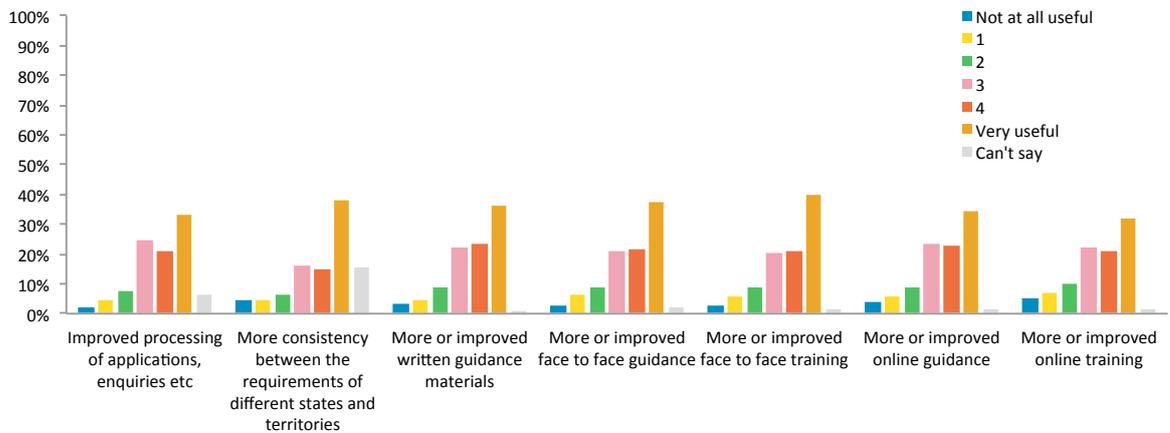


Figure 64: Management type of the organisation by wave

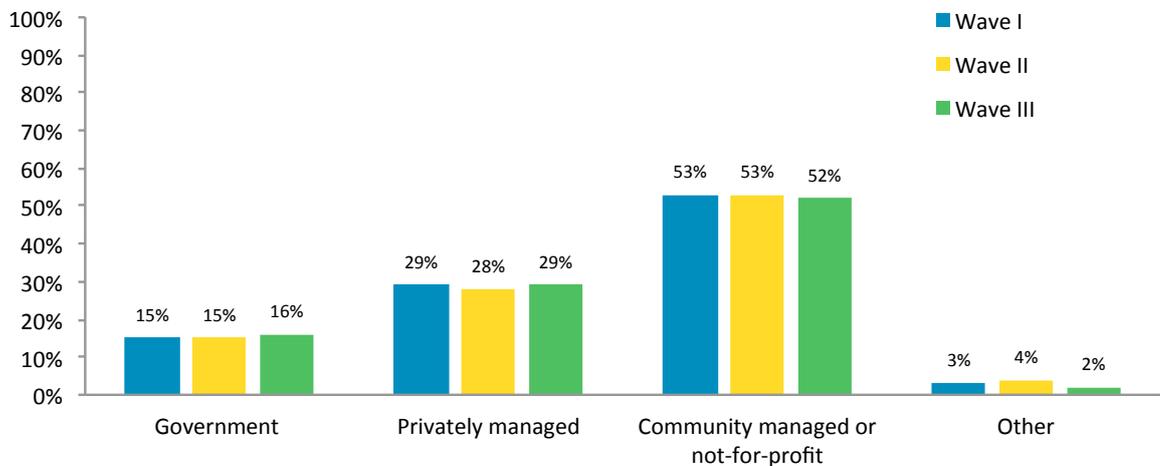
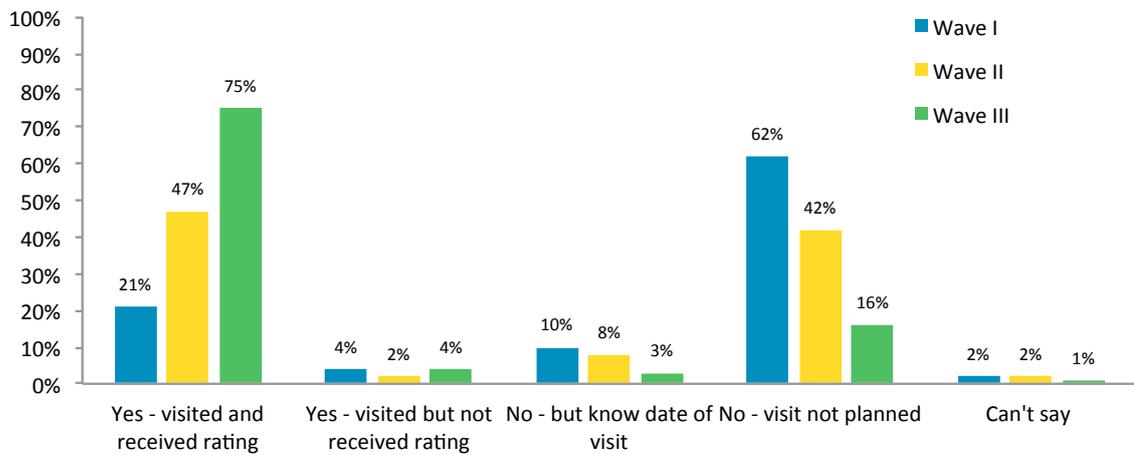


Figure 65: Assessment and rating status of the organisation by wave



## 7. Appendix D: Administrative burden perception survey – Wave III

### Administrative burden perception survey: Wave III

#### HOW TO READ THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

There are two main sample groups:

- Approved providers
- Nominated supervisors

Approved providers are further broken down into:

- Multi-service providers (providers with more than one service)
- Single-service providers

Each of the above groups will be identified in the sample file and the questionnaire will be programmed so that only the relevant questions are asked of each group.

Where the words [organisation/service] are presented, approved providers should see 'organisation' and nominated supervisors should see 'service'.

Page headings are written in **red bold** and question logic (routing) is written in **BLUE CAPITALS**.

#### About this survey

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important survey. This survey is the third stage in a study aiming to evaluate and understand the administrative cost experienced by services under the National Quality Framework (NQF).

The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

Any information you provide in the survey will be confidential and will be used for the purposes of this research only.

To help us measure any changes in your experiences and continue to improve the NQF, we would also like to follow up with you again in 12 months. At the end of the survey there will be an opportunity to provide your preferred email address for us to recontact you.

## Who is collecting this information?

This survey is being undertaken by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

ACECQA is independent of state and territory regulatory authorities and the Australian Government. ACECQA will not share your individual responses with any other organisation. When we report on the findings, your answers will be combined with those of other respondents so that no one can identify your answers.

The survey is being managed by ACECQA's research and evaluation team. Members of the research and evaluation team are bound by the Commonwealth Privacy Act. Data from the survey will be de-identified for the analysis.

## What to do if you need help

If you experience any technical difficulties, please email [INSERT CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS].

If you have any other questions about this research please call ACECQA on 1300 4 ACECQA (1300 422 327) or email [research@acecqa.gov.au](mailto:research@acecqa.gov.au)

## Who should take part

### ALL APPROVED PROVIDERS:

This survey is for approved providers of education and care services.

Only one person from each approved provider should complete this survey. That person should be someone with a good understanding of the administrative practices of the organisation, and particularly those practices involved in complying with the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations.

### MULTI-SERVICE PROVIDERS:

For example, the most appropriate respondent might be a:

- Chief Executive Officer
- General Manager
- Director
- Coordinator
- Operations Manager
- Administration Manager
- Someone else with responsibility for administrative practices.

### SINGLE-SERVICE PROVIDERS:

For example, the most appropriate respondent might be a:

- Centre Director/Coordinator/Nominated Supervisor
- Owner
- Committee Chairperson
- Someone else with responsibility for administrative practices.

### NOMINATED SUPERVISORS:

This survey is for nominated supervisors of education and care services.

If the nominated supervisor is not available, the survey should be completed by the person at the service who best understands the nominated supervisor's role.

**EVERYONE:**

**About you and your [organisation/service]**

To ensure we hear from a good cross-section of [organisations/nominated supervisors], we need to first ask you some questions about you and your [organisation/service]

**D1. What type(s) of approved education and care service(s) do you provide or manage?**

Please select all that apply

1	Long day care	CONTINUE
2	Preschool/kindergarten	CONTINUE
3	Out of school hours care (including vacation care)	CONTINUE
4	Family day care	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	TERMINATE
99	None of the above [Single response]	TERMINATE

**IF CODE 98 (CAN'T SAY) OR 99 (NONE OF THE ABOVE):**

Thank you for your time but we only need to speak to organisations that provide an approved education and care service under the Education and Care Services National Law.

If you think your organisation provides one of these services and you want to take part in the survey, please call ACECQA on 1300 4 ACECQA (1300 422 327). [\[TERMINATE SURVEY\]](#)

**APPROVED PROVIDERS:**

**D2A. Which of the following best describes your position at the organisation?**

Please select one only

1	Chief Executive Officer	CONTINUE
2	General Manager	CONTINUE
3	Service Director/Coordinator/Nominated Supervisor	CONTINUE
4	Operations Manager	CONTINUE
5	Administration Manager	CONTINUE
6	Committee Chairperson	CONTINUE
97	Other (please specify)	CONTINUE

### NOMINATED SUPERVISORS:

D2B. Are you the nominated supervisor?

Please select one only

1	Yes	CONTINUE
2	No	CONTINUE

### EVERYONE:

D3. What is the postcode of the physical location of your [organisation/service]?

If your organisation has more than one postcode, please state the main postcode

\_\_\_\_\_ [Numerical open-end] [4 digits only]

### EVERYONE:

#### Support for the NQF

Q1. Overall, how supportive are you of the NQF?

Please select one only

[SINGLE RESPONSE]

1	Not at all supportive	CONTINUE
2	Not very supportive	CONTINUE
3	Moderately supportive	CONTINUE
4	Supportive	CONTINUE
5	Very supportive	CONTINUE
98	Can't say	CONTINUE

## EVERYONE:

### Administrative requirements

The rest of the questionnaire asks specifically about the administrative requirements of the Education and Care Services National Law and Regulations (the National Law and Regulations).

When we say 'administrative requirements' we mean all of the activities involved in meeting the information requirements of the National Law and Regulations.

This includes things like:

- filling out and submitting applications for approvals, certificates or notification of changes
- organising paperwork to prepare for visits from your regulatory authority
- keeping records of attendance or incidents
- producing and maintaining policies and procedures
- maintaining quality improvement plans
- documenting assessments of children's learning.

This does not include things like implementing educator to child ratios or requirements relating to the physical environment of a service.

Please only answer about administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations. Please do not answer about administrative requirements of any other government legislation. For example, you should not answer about any of the administrative requirements involved in family assistance legislation, i.e. Child Care Benefit, or local government approvals.

[Note: THE ABOVE EXPLANATION OF 'ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS' IS PROVIDED AS HOVEROVER INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE SURVEY]

**EVERYONE:**

**Adjusting to the National Law and Regulations**

To prepare for and implement the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations, your [organisation/service] may have had to complete many activities. Some of these activities will have been temporary adjustments, for example, rewriting existing policies and procedures, and learning about the changes.

The next few questions ask about those temporary or one-off activities that are caused by moving to the new system. You may have to think back to when the National Law and Regulations were first introduced at the beginning of 2012.

You will be asked about ongoing activities in a later section.

Please answer these questions as honestly as you can, regardless of your overall level of support for the National Law and Regulations.

**EVERYONE:**

**Q4. How much of a burden, if at all, are the following activities currently?**

Please rate them on a scale of 0-5, where 0 is 'not at all burdensome' and 5 is 'very burdensome'

[SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW, RANDOMISE]

							Very bur- den-	
A	Learning about the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
B	Developing policies and procedures that comply with the National Law and Regulations	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
C	Ensuring staff know about the changes	0	1	2	3	4	5	98

IF MORE THAN ONE ACTIVITY RATED JOINT HIGHEST AT Q4 (AND RATED 5 OR ABOVE), ASK:

Q5A. Which one would you say is currently most of a burden

Please select one only

ASK IF MORE THAN ONE ACTIVITY RATED JOINT HIGHEST AT Q4 (AND RATED 4 OR ABOVE) – OTHERWISE, AUTOPUNCH RESPONSE FROM Q4. DISPLAY ONLY THOSE RATED JOINT MOST BURDENSOME. ASK:

1	Learning about the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations	CONTINUE
2	Developing policies and procedures that comply with the National Law and Regulations	CONTINUE
3	Ensuring staff know about the changes	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	SKIP TO Q6

IF ONE ACTIVITY RATED HIGHEST AT Q4 (AND RATED 4 OR OVER) OR CHOSE ONE ACTIVITY AS MOST BURDENSOME AT Q5A (ANY OF CODES 1-3 AT Q5A), ASK:

Q5B. You rated [answer from Q4 or Q5A] as most burdensome. What factors currently make it a burden?

If there are other factors, please select 'other' and specify them

Please select all that apply

[RANDOMISE OPTIONS 1-5]

1	Staff hours/time	CONTINUE
2	Financial costs	CONTINUE
3	Difficulty understanding the requirements	CONTINUE
4	Diverts attention from other activities	CONTINUE
5	Frustration or stress	CONTINUE
97	Other (please specify)	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	CONTINUE

**EVERYONE:**

**Ongoing administrative activities**

The next few questions ask about ongoing administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations.

Please think about your current experience of these requirements rather than when the National Law and Regulations were first introduced.

**Q6. How much of a burden, if at all, are the following ongoing requirements of the National Law and Regulations currently?**

Please rate them on a scale of 0-5, where 0 is 'not at all burdensome' and 5 is 'very burdensome'.

[SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW, RANDOMISE]

NOTE HOVEROVER TEXT TO BE USED AT CODES A-K

		Not at all burdensome					Very burdensome	Can't say/ Not applicable
A	Displaying information	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
B	Keeping records	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
C	Provider and service approvals	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
D	Qualifications assessments	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
E	Supervisor certificates	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
F	Quality assessment and ratings visits	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
G	Notifications	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
H	Quality Improvement Plans	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
I	Documenting children's learning	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
J	Maintaining policies and procedures	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
K	Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
L	Waivers	0	1	2	3	4	5	98

#### HOVER-OVER INFORMATION FOR CODES A-K IN Q6, ABOVE:

- A. **Displaying information** – e.g. displaying information about the responsible person in charge, service approval information, etc.
- B. **Keeping records** – e.g. keeping attendance records, injury records, a record of educators working with children etc.
- C. **Provider and service approvals** – e.g. applying for a new service approval, applying for a transfer of service approval, etc.
- D. **Qualifications assessments** – the process for individuals having their qualifications assessed for equivalence
- E. **Supervisor certificates** – e.g. managing certified supervisor and nominated supervisor approvals
- F. **Quality assessment and ratings visits** – e.g. preparing for and facilitating a visit, or responding to a report
- G. **Notifications** – e.g. notifying the regulatory authority of serious incidents or changes to a service
- H. **Quality Improvement Plans** – maintaining a Quality Improvement Plan, also known as a “QIP”
- I. **Documenting children’s learning** – keeping records of children’s learning assessments or evaluations
- J. **Maintaining policies and procedures** – maintaining policies and procedures, as opposed to initially developing them
- K. **Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations** – ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations on an ongoing basis
- L. **Waivers** – the process of applying for a waiver.

**IF RATED KEEPING RECORDS AS 4 OR OVER ON SCALE OF BURDEN (CODES 4-5 AT Q6 ROW B):**

Q7. You said that keeping records is a burden. Which specific requirements are currently a burden?

Please select all that apply

1	Keeping attendance records	CONTINUE
2	Keeping injury records	CONTINUE
3	Keeping a record of educators working directly with children	CONTINUE
4	Keeping a record of the responsible person in charge  NOT INCLUDED FOR FAMILY DAY CARE RESPONDENTS (THOSE WHO SELECTED OPTION 4 ONLY AT QUESTION D1)	CONTINUE
97	Other (please specify)	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	CONTINUE

**IF RATED NOTIFICATIONS AS 4 OR OVER ON SCALE OF BURDEN (CODES 4-5 AT Q6 ROW G):**

Q8. You said that notifications are a burden. Which specific requirements are currently a burden?

Please select all that apply

1	Notifying of changes to a service	CONTINUE
2	Notifying of changes to an approved provider (INCLUDED FOR APPROVED PROVIDER SAMPLE ONLY)	CONTINUE
3	Notifying of serious incidents	CONTINUE
4	Notifying of complaints and other incidents	CONTINUE
97	Other (please specify)	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	CONTINUE

**IF RATED QUALITY ASSESSMENT AND RATINGS VISITS AS 4 OR OVER ON SCALE OF BURDEN (CODES 4-5 AT Q6 ROW F):**

**Q8A. You said that Quality assessment and ratings visits are a burden. Which specific tasks are currently a burden?**

Please select all that apply

[RANDOMISE OPTIONS 1-8]

1	Preparing staff for quality assessment and ratings visits	CONTINUE
2	Preparing paperwork for quality assessment and ratings visits	CONTINUE
3	Communicating to families about quality assessment and ratings visits	CONTINUE
4	Preparing the service environment for quality assessment and ratings visits	CONTINUE
5	Facilitating the visit on the day of the assessment	CONTINUE
6	Interpreting assessment and ratings reports	CONTINUE
7	Participating in the review process (e.g. providing a response to the draft report, applying for review)	CONTINUE
8	Communicating rating to families	CONTINUE
97	Other (please specify)	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	CONTINUE

**IF RATED QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLANS AS 4 OR OVER ON SCALE OF BURDEN (CODES 4-5 AT Q6 ROW H):**

**Q8B. You said that Quality Improvement Plans are a burden. Which specific tasks are currently a burden?**

Please select all that apply

[RANDOMISE OPTIONS 1-4]

1	Identifying areas of improvement	CONTINUE
2	Documenting the QIP	CONTINUE
3	Annual update of QIP	CONTINUE
4	Having a current QIP available on request (updated within the last 12 months)	CONTINUE
5	Prioritising areas for improvement to be included in the QIP	CONTINUE
97	Other (please specify)	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	CONTINUE

IF MORE THAN ONE REQUIREMENT RATED JOINT HIGHEST AT Q6, ASK:

Q9A. Which one would you say is currently most of a burden?

Please select one only

DISPLAY ONLY THOSE RATED JOINT HIGHEST

RANDOMISE OPTIONS 1-11 IF MORE THAN THREE REQUIREMENTS SELECTED

HOVER-OVER INFORMATION TO EXPLAIN OPTIONS, AS PER Q6

1	Displaying information	CONTINUE
2	Keeping records	CONTINUE
3	Provider and service approvals	CONTINUE
4	Qualifications assessments	CONTINUE
5	Supervisor certificates	CONTINUE
6	Quality assessment and ratings visits	CONTINUE
7	Notifications	CONTINUE
8	Quality Improvement Plans	CONTINUE
9	Documenting children's learning	CONTINUE
10	Maintaining policies and procedures	CONTINUE
11	Ensuring staff know about the National Law and Regulations	CONTINUE
12	Waivers	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	SKIP TO Q10

IF ONE REQUIREMENT RATED HIGHEST AT Q6 OR CHOSE ONE ACTIVITY AS MOST BURDENSOME AT Q9A (ANY RATING LEVEL), ASK:

Q9B. You rated [answer from Q6 or Q9A] as most burdensome. What factors currently make it a burden?

If there are other factors, please select 'other' and specify them

Please select all that apply

[RANDOMISE OPTIONS 1-6]

1	Staff hours/time	CONTINUE
2	Financial costs	CONTINUE

3	Difficulty understanding the requirements	CONTINUE
5	Diverts attention from other activities	CONTINUE
6	Frustration or stress	CONTINUE
97	Other (please specify)	CONTINUE
98	Can't say [Single response]	CONTINUE

**EVERYONE:**

Q10. Focusing on ongoing administrative requirements (rather than one-off activities), please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Please select one response per row

**[RANDOMISE]**

		Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree	Can't say/Not applicable
A	Administrative burden has reduced since the introduction of the National Law and Regulations	1	2	3	4	5	98
B	It is easy to find information about the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations	1	2	3	4	5	98
C	It is difficult to understand the administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations	1	2	3	4	5	98
D	Administrative requirements across the states and territories are consistent (INCLUDED FOR APPROVED PROVIDERS ONLY)	1	2	3	4	5	98
E	The administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations are simpler than the previous licensing and accreditation systems	1	2	3	4	5	98
F	I feel I am doing more work than necessary to make sure that I meet the requirements of the National Law and Regulations	1	2	3	4	5	98

**Q11. Overall, how much of a burden are the ongoing administrative requirements of the National Law and Regulations?**

Please rate them on a scale of 0-5, where 0 is 'not at all burdensome' and 5 is 'very burdensome'

[SINGLE RESPONSE]

0	0 – Not at all burdensome	CONTINUE
1	1	CONTINUE
2	2	CONTINUE
3	3	CONTINUE
4	4	CONTINUE
5	5 – Very burdensome	CONTINUE
98	Can't say	CONTINUE

**EVERYONE:**

**Q16. How useful would the following changes be in reducing administrative burden for your [organisation/ service] under the National Law and Regulations?**

Please select one response per row

[SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW, RANSDOMISE]

		Not at all useful					Very useful	Can't say/Not applicable
A	Improved processing of applications, enquiries etc.	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
B	More consistency between the requirements of different states and territories	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
C	More or improved written guidance materials	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
D	More or improved face to face guidance	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
E	More or improved face to face training	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
F	More or improved online guidance	0	1	2	3	4	5	98
G	More or improved online training	0	1	2	3	4	5	98

**EVERYONE:**

Q17. Do you have any other suggestions for how to reduce administrative burden under the National Law and Regulations, without compromising the quality of education and care for children?

\_\_\_\_\_ [open-end]

99	I have no further suggestions	CONTINUE
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**Final questions about you and your [organisation/service]**

To ensure we interview a good cross-section of organisations, we need to ask some final questions about you and your [organisation/service].

D6. Which of the following best describes your [organisation/service]?

Please select one only

1	Government (state/territory/local)	SKIP TO D8
2	Privately managed	CONTINUE
3	Community managed or not-for-profit	SKIP TO D8
97	Other (please specify)	SKIP TO D8
98	Can't say	SKIP TO D8

**MULTI-SERVICE APPROVED PROVIDERS:**

[DO NOT ASK QUESTION AGAIN IF SELECTED OPTION 1 IN WAVE I]

D8A. Have any of your services had a quality assessment and ratings visit under the NQF?

Please select one only

1	Yes, one or more services have been visited and/or received their ratings	CONTINUE
2	Yes, one or more services have been visited but none have received their ratings	CONTINUE
3	No, but one or more services have been notified of the date of their visit	CONTINUE
4	No, and there are no visits planned	CONTINUE
98	Can't say	CONTINUE

**SINGLE-SERVICE PROVIDERS/NOMINATED SUPERVISORS:**

[DO NOT ASK QUESTION AGAIN IF SELECTED OPTION 1 IN WAVE I]

**D8B. Has your service had a quality assessment and ratings visit under the NQF?**

Please select one only

1	Yes, the service has been visited and received its rating	CONTINUE
2	Yes, the service has been visited but has not received its rating	CONTINUE
3	No, but the service has been notified of the date of its visit	CONTINUE
4	No, and there is no visit planned	CONTINUE
98	Can't say	CONTINUE

**Thank you and next steps**

Thank you for taking part in the third stage of this important study.

It is important that we are able to follow up with you again in 12 months. This will help us measure any changes in your experiences and continue to improve the NQF.

We recognise that this survey may not have been sent to the most appropriate email address for you. So that we can contact you directly, please provide your email address in the box below. We will only use this to contact you about this research and your participation will remain strictly confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_ [open-end]

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact ACECQA on 1300 4 ACECQA (1300 422 327) or [research@acecqa.gov.au](mailto:research@acecqa.gov.au).

